THE TEN GREATEST WORDS ABOUT JESUS

J. C. MASSEE, D.D.

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NEW YORK
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THE TEN GREATEST WORDS ABOUT JESUS
—A—
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY BROTHERS
JOSEPH DREWRY MASSEE
And
NEEDHAM WASHINGTON MASSEE

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I

The Word of the Angel.

NOW the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother, Mary, had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit, and Joseph, her husband being a righteous man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; *for it is he who shall save his people from their sins. Now, all this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying:*

Behold the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name, Immanuel, which is being interpreted "God with us!"

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he it is that shall save his people from their sins."

Among the ancients and the orientals names had a very profound significance. This significance was taken into account far more than is done in our modern names, for we name our children after the hero or heroine of the latest novel, or after the last president or some outstanding general of the last war. This was not so among those of ancient days or in oriental lands. Their children were often named in relation to God, or because of some dealing with God, or for something which grew out of their relationship to God.

Take, for instance, the name Abram. This name originally signified "The Father of Height," but when Abram had established his relation to God by faith, his name was changed from Abram, "The Father of Height," to Abraham, the father of the multitude and the friend of God. There is the same significance underlying the change of the name Jacob to Israel. Jacob, the supplanter, in the famous experience at Jabbok becomes Israel, the prince who prevails with God and man. All the names of the Old Testament have in them the significance embodied in the very

heart of the name which relates them through a place or person somehow to God.

We have carried this significance somewhat into our modern habit of nicknaming. For instance, there was Chinese Gordon, the incomparable English general who lost his given name in the Chinese campaign for a name which designated his service. We of the South never tire of the name "Stonewall Jackson," for although his name was Thomas J., his firm stand in the first battle of Manassas called forth the comment, "There stands Jackson like a Stone Wall." So he came to be known and loved universally as Stonewall Jackson.

Therefore, thus the angelic messenger came to give the name to the child who was about to be born, to the Son about to be given. And the name given had God's significance for the person who should bear it, a significance which endures through time and eternity. It is the same name as the Joshua of the old dispensation. But no other name is comparable to the name given here, for while Joshua also means saviour, the name Jesus carries with it undisputed sway, both in the realm of altruistic service and of divine mercy—as an inspiration to the thought of that salvation which God provides.

The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he it is who shall save his people from their sins." The name therefore designates the work of this One. It indicates not that he is

to be the great political leader, nor the outstanding military hero of his age. He is not to become a leader of some socialistic movement in society; not a labor agitator, not the exponent even of religious dogma, but he is to be the Saviour of his people from their sins.

"There is no name so sweet on earth,
No name so sweet in Heaven,
The name before His wondrous birth,
By angels to Him given."

This, then, is the introductory name the angel gave to the world. What about the world to which the angel introduced Jesus who is about to be born? It was a world of spiritual impoverishment in which spiritual vision had failed, spiritual passion had been lost, spiritual understanding had been dulled by ritualism and formalism. It was a day of multiplicity of religions and religious conformities, a day of religious tolerance, of religious polygamies, for the nations were married to many gods and the many gods dominated the thought of many nations. It was a world in which polytheism naturally and inevitably destroyed the sovereignty of the One, eternal God and belief in his person, his holiness, and his salvation. It was a day in which intellectual incompetency groped for the answer to the riddle of the universe while political autocracy laid its intolerable loads upon the shoulders of peoples struggling against their oppressors whose burdens of taxation and the military demands of a great world empire laid

upon humanity a tribute of service that they were unable to bear. It was a day whose very civilization made a staggering, grovelling, groaning humanity, hopeless in the midst of its progress. It was a day of social disaster and disintegration. Morality had broken down; and the morale of such morality as remained was utterly demoralized.

Personality had lost value in the world into which Jesus was born. In that world a man was hardly better than a beast, and a woman was not so good. There are cases where aristocratic Romans, high in the official life of the nation, swapped wives, while one threw in a political job on the side to balance the inequality in the woman equation on the other. Truth was the unknown equation in every relation of life. Men groped in the darkness hoping to find a way through the mystic realm of vagaries of thought and abnormalities of rationalistic philosophy and the hopeless incompetency of speculative critics. His was a day and an hour in which materialism had organized itself into militarism, and demanded of the race that it bend its neck to the yoke of that burdensome service always entailed by militaristic government. It was into this sea of confusion, into the midst of a people humbled and oppressed, hopeless, condemned by their godlessness that Jesus is introduced by the angelic announcement and by his later birth.

Now, world conditions, like the physical condi-

tions of the human body, are symptomatic and therefore temporary, but the cause of conditions is permanent and therefore vital. Political, commercial, economic, domestic, scientific and social disorders are always superficial. Those disorders may express themselves in a variety of forms and directions. They may be the old sores to which the race has become accustomed as they may crop out as seemingly altogether new faults, but the one who knows truth or is able to diagnose truly the condition of humanity knows that all superficial or social disorders may be traced back to the one focus of infection which is sin in the souls of men in relation to God and to their fellowmen.

It has seemed to me as I have brooded over this wonderful word again that the situation in which Joseph found himself is a typical and a sufficient illustration of all world conditions then and now, and of the remedy which is proposed now as it was proposed then, at the birth of Jesus, the mighty son of God, to be the child born as Son of man. *He should save men from their sins.*

Joseph is in great perplexity, and his perplexity produced a problem that had in it only the promise of pain. A righteous man facing a situation which he knew not how to handle, asking himself questions to which he knew not the answer, seeking a way for his feet with care, with prayer, with brooding meditation, lest he do himself, or another, or society, wrong, he was confronted with a problem that might humiliate his own soul, de-

stroy the life of another and strike at the very foundation of social integrity, a problem filled with perplexity and promising only pain in its answer.

And then, Joseph was surrounded with a poverty so profound, so deep and of so personal a nature as to have in it nothing but a promise of permanency. He was not able to bring a lamb as an offering for the child at his presentation in the temple, not a lamb to purify his wife according to the Mosaic law, but he brought only doves and pigeons, which were the offering of the exceeding poor. And his physical poverty was an apt illustration in type and symbol of that poverty which lies in his vicinity and encompasses his life in every possible moral, spiritual and social direction.

Also, this child was to be born—born or habitated in Nazareth, in the midst of prejudice so profound that there was in it no hope of escape in all the future.

In these three things, *perplexity, poverty and prejudice,* all the pangs of this world are to be felt. From them all the heritage which sin entails to man accumulates to the hurt of the race. Perplexities presenting life's problems, poverty making life's limitations, prejudice establishing life's inhibitions. What more can sin do than is suggested by these three things. It was from sin, first cause of these and all their by-products, that

Jesus is offered as Saviour. We may well consider the possibility of the solution of all the world's problems, the supply of all its need as proposed by the angel who introduced the name Jesus into the midst of man's perplexities, poverty and prejudices.

JOSEPH'S PROBLEM A WORLD PROBLEM.

Joseph's personal perplexity was the world's popular problem. Review his situation once again. See him as the typical man in the midst of a difficult situation, discussing with himself in the silences of the night, and with the Great Companion, whom he knew and we know as the Living God, to whom men instinctively turn in their moments of confusion—discussing with him, I say, problems which perplex and confuse, problems which he could not, because of their very nature, discuss with any mortal being, however close and intimate the relationship between himself and that one might be. Joseph, in his perplexity about Mary, faced social and moral questions that are beyond the reach of any human wisdom to answer. Day by day he faced a problem that grew in its proportions, until almost necessarily moral despair settled upon him and filled the darkness of each succeeding night with a yet deeper gloom. What should he do? What could he do to protect his own honor, to defend the woman he loved, to safeguard the integrity of the society in the midst of which they must live? Surely he had

hard questions to answer and perplexing problems for which no human wisdom is ever adequate.

So the most of us have problems for which we have no solution, and we must face those problems to-day. I do not know any family that has not its problems, no parents who have not their perplexities. A distinguished man said to me only the other day: "I once thought that there were no problems for me and my family, that I was among the favored ones of the earth who had no heart-aches, no shadows through which to walk and no rack for the testing of my soul by the circumstances and situations of my life. But," said he, "my first-born has broken my heart. He seemed determined to fling away his heritage of honor, to destroy the peace of my heart and my home, to humble, humiliate and distress his mother and me, until at last we were forced to close the door of our home in the face of our son." Then, I began to see that my neighbours, while they might not have my problem, had their problem. Some perplexity awaited the parents in every home into which I have entered. All my observation indicated that none of my friends missed their perplexities, none of my neighbours were without their problems. The more conspicuous the life of the individual, the heavier the burden of perplexity frequently is. Life's experiences are filled with questions which cannot be answered. What my friend had discovered in his situation I have discovered in mine. What is true of that group of

humans whom I observe and whose experiences I share is without doubt true of the group which you know and whose experiences you share. Joseph had his problem and, while Joseph's problem may not be yours, *Joseph's perplexity is yours.*

If you do not like his problem and think that it is not yours, come and stand with me for a moment by another man concerned with this same Jesus. Pilate holds in his hands the reins of political government and is charged with keeping the peace among a turbulent people. He is a politician under fire, a governor in the midst of a grueling experience, for he is surrounded with men more concerned to destroy him than they are to establish or maintain law and order for themselves and their people. There is thrust upon him the necessity to pass judgment upon Jesus, a judgment which was a personal, a political and a social matter of vast importance to the people among whom he lived and over whom he ruled. Looking into the face of Jesus, who stands before his tribunal he finds no fault in him. But the innocence of Jesus was not his problem. His problem was to know what to do, and how to do it, with an innocent man whom the angry mob had determined to destroy. How could he protect the innocent in the face of a determined popular demand for the destruction of innocence and virtue? His wife had called Jesus "a just man" and warned her husband by virtue of her dream

to have nothing to do with him. He, himself, pronouncing him an innocent man, faces a mob demanding that he shall give him over to death. Looking into the face of that Christ, he asks with a sad pathos, "What is truth? What is right?" He is caught between the upper and nether millstones of his own desires and interests on the one hand and the prejudice of a mob on the other. Being thus caught, he was ground to powder while crying, "What is truth? What is my way out? What shall I do now? How shall I take account of all the interests involved in this situation?" Caution, prudence, self-interest, political expediency, the popular will, all unite their voices to coerce him to a path and a judgment against which conscience, reason and righteousness protest. If he saves Jesus, he may destroy himself, and in destroying himself may not even save Jesus, for whom he risks himself. In vain he washes his hands. In vain he disclaims responsibility. In vain he takes the easy course of least resistance. At the end of his tragic hour, he is still crying, "What is truth?"

Now, this question of Pilate is the premise upon which all Gentile philosophy in this world is based. Hebrew philosophy is expressed in this syllogism, "God is. Wisdom is of God. Therefore the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But Gentile philosophy is based upon the question of Pilate, "What is truth?" for a Godless world gropes in the dark seeking the answer to the rid-

dle of the universe, a wisdom for the universal presence of human perplexity. What is truth? The scientist in his laboratory, the teacher in his library, the politician in his office, all ask it. The business man, with his burdens, asks this question. The parent with his problems and the child in his seeking after knowledge also ask—what is truth? The whole world is asking, What is truth? What is right? What is *the way* in the midst of the many ways that present themselves? What is the way of the least difficulties and the greatest security, the way of safety? Oh, if I could answer that question, What is truth? for you all! If I could lead you to see what is the best thing to be done for your boy; what is truth, and how to get truth to your girl; if I could answer for you what is truth about the money that does not quite make ends meet, or the job that seems to be slipping (how to hold it!). If I could somehow lift the weight from those upon whose shoulders and hearts God has put the burden of family and its obligations, and put their souls in touch with the answer to that question, What is truth?

In other words, if I could help you to solve your problem and give the answer to your perplexity; if I could find the answer to the perplexities and problems that men meet, I would not have time during the balance of my life to do anything save to greet the crowds that pass my door to get the answer, each to his problem—the problem of pain, the problem of work, the problem of untimely

death, the problem of sorrow that wrings out of the very soul of one who does not understand the cry, "Why should this happen to me?" I do not wonder Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly. Now we know in part." I do not wonder that the one great cry through the world has been, "Lord, teach us. Tell us the way to the well from which if one drink he shall never thirst again. Tell us the way to the place where we can lay down the burden and find the easy way and give us the answer to the riddle, the universal riddle of human experience and temptations. O God, deliver us from our wanderings and gropings and stumblings!" Joseph, out of the deep darkness of your dismal Gethsemane, out of the travail of your soul's perplexity, out of the problem of all problems, the problem of shame and anxiety, the problem of humility and social degradation, out of all the problems of this world and of this life hear the answer of God through the angel's message, *"I will give you a Saviour."*

Jesus shall save his people from their problems? No! Jesus shall save his people from their perplexities? No! *But he saves them from their sins that make problems and perplexities.* He will dig deep to the root of the tree of unanswered questions. He will dissipate the darkness of a soul in despair, will dig out the very foundations of anxiety. There is a promise from God himself that when he has saved the perplexed, problem-burdened humanity from its sins,

they shall know all things. There shall be given to them a Voice saying, "This is the way. Walk ye in it." "I will never leave you." "I will guide you with mine eye." All the problem-bound and perplexed Josephs in the world suddenly hear the voice of the angel from God saying, "*Jesus is the answer.*"

It was my privilege to know intimately one of the great governors of one of the greatest Southern States, that Southern State whose dominating leadership in the intellectual betterment, in material progress, in the betterment of its political and social conditions, in sound, economic development has been widely advertised. When Robert Glenn became governor of North Carolina, though he was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, he was a worldly leader of worldly society, believing that he had secured a political job which as to duty was a sinecure and as to privilege was a stepping-stone to further political preferment. He believed that being governor he might become senator and was definitely shaping his career toward that goal. I have heard him say that when elected governor he did not conceive that the office carried any particular moral responsibility. He expected that he would have to occupy an office, sign bills, and to a certain extent determine political policies.

But one morning at six o'clock the governor came to a prayer meeting in my church in Raleigh. That was an hour of great searching

of souls and there he found himself. From that moment he became a new man with a new sense of responsibility. Later he said many times publicly that from that hour he had come to see that the political complexities of his constituency arose out of their abandonment of God. He realized that the very foundation of political integrity was being undermined by criminal immorality because men had ceased to recognize God and were abandoning themselves everywhere to indulgence in evil practices. He came to see that the conditions of political crime and social disease that were destroying the State made the same demands that such conditions of evil had always made and that the remedy for the situation was to be found in the same place and in the same way. Forty-nine counties of that State were reputed to be among the most ignorant in the world. The people of that State were cursed with prejudices handed down from generation to generation. Problems of poverty appeared everywhere. These problems had to be met; some solution for the social evils had to be found. In his new spiritual illumination the governor came to see that social righteousness and political integrity are always founded upon personal righteousness and individual integrity. That morning at six o'clock in the prayer meeting a tidal wave of spiritual power arose in our souls. Tides of heavenly light and divine power broke all bounds and swept us along irresistibly. The governor

prayed, pouring out his soul, and in praying yielded himself to the fulness of the divine indwelling and in a new way (it may have been for the first time) he received into his soul the Jesus of whose birth the angels spoke to Joseph in the midst of his problems.

From that hour Robert Glenn was a changed man and a changed leader. A totally new conception of his office, his responsibility and his high privilege came to him. He became an itinerant preacher of righteousness throughout the length and breadth of the State. Many heard him publicly proclaim on many occasions that he had come to consider his supreme duty and highest privilege under God to preach righteousness in the name of Jesus Christ and to persuade his State from sin to salvation, from unbelief to faith. *Jesus saving his people from their sins became the answer of the personal and public problems of that great hearted man.* I have in my possession a private letter from him in which he stated to me, with great feeling, that if he had a sufficient number of men in the State consumed with the holy passion for Jesus Christ and the salvation for souls, his problems as governor would be much lighter. No, God does not promise by the voice of angels nor by the voice of prophets that he will save his people from their perplexities and problems. He does propose to save them from their sins and that salvation is a far more significant and vital thing.

Poverty! What a despairing thing it is to be poor! The grinding poverty of such as Joseph and Mary, and Jesus. Born to poverty! Born to limitations! No travel for him! No pictures on the walls of his home. No books on the shelves of his library. There was no library. No contact with world forces. Born to trouble! Born to labor. Adam's curse is about to be fulfilled in his experience. By the sweat of his brow shall he earn the bread he eats, bend his shoulders to the task, until he becomes in Edwin Markham's striking phrase, "brother to the ox" in the burden bearing of the world.

I know, looking upon the problems of poverty from the hill of the Cross, there is another aspect of labor. Looking at it from the standpoint of unredeemed humanity with its certain indelible brand upon the souls of men, the weariness of labor is still the curse of sin. It is a great privilege to work when you wish to work, but it is slavery to be driven to work whether you will or not. The pinch of want, of hunger, of nakedness, of cold, of exposure, presents a long series of impossible problems.

But that is not the entire range of this question. I think of poverty in other directions. There is the poverty of mind. Living in Nazareth! Shut in by the hills of Judea, with their limitations for his outlook on life. I do not know whether he had ever climbed to the top of some hill, from which he might see a world with its challenge of oppor-

tunity spread before his eyes. I doubt if he ever caught the vision of any intellectual Himalayan range or any Pike's Peak had ever taken hold upon the thought and imagination of men of his day and locality. Born to poverty of mind! Born to poverty of achievement.

How little has humanity been able to do! I marvel at what men have done, certainly. I stand before the great engineering feats, before the great achievements of builders, before buildings and institutions and empires reared by the labors of men in absolute amazement. I look at the great towers they have erected, the great empires they have constructed, the great governments for which they have laid foundations of political philosophy. But when I am through marvelling, I am compelled to consider what they might have done! Here is Niagara harnessed! 160,000 H. P. obedient to the behest of man. Can you conceive it? But it is nothing, for Niagara roars with a million H. P. of unharnessed energy. I lift up my gaze to the skies and with these unaided eyes pick out of the starry heavens 1090 worlds, and say, "Behold, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." But, I wait a moment, shut my eyes and ask my soul, "Has the infinite God in infinite space only made eleven hundred stars?" Then I call to my aid a glass, lay a telescope on the field of the skies and there in the meadows of heaven I trace out the path of five hundred million stars and planets

and know that I have touched only the border of infinity and of immensity.

How little has man achieved! The books we have written, the philosophies we have created, the sciences we have constructed until we have ruled God out of the world! The only god men have loved permanently is the god of their own importance. How little man has! How poverty-stricken of mind and spirit! Man's soul ought to catch the sweep of eternity with the spirit of Jesus. He ought to march through the immensities of time and space on the highways prepared for a King's feet, but he gropes in the dark, and grovels upon the earth. Jesus shall save his people from their sins!

Do you not remember when he himself came to interpret his ministry, he said, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He does break the shackles of man's limitations, and sets the soul free to soar. He gives to man the illimitable space of time and eternity and makes the corridors of his heart the familiar highways of his travels. Ah! the liberty that is in man through Christ! Philosophy has not been able to bring out the souls of men into the place of large liberty. Scientific speculations have lost the way in the face of its need for a larger life.

But Jesus, liberating the souls of men, has brought them out into the large spaces of freedom.

I heard a great man shout one night. He was the senior deacon of a church that I loved. He had one son who had gone astray, who had missed his way in the mystic mazes of philosophic vagaries; who out of that intellectual confusion had lost step with God. I had the privilege one night while his father presided at a meeting, of following this son out of the service and to his home, and stopping there with him until he had been led to the feet of Jesus, who saves men from sin. There I saw him suddenly gripped by the Holy Spirit and heard him declare his reverence for and allegiance to the Son of God, his soul companion, divine teacher, healer and Lord. Together we walked over to the church, where his father was still presiding there in the meeting. He walked in and said, "Father, I have come home." The great hearted servant of God forgot the conventions and shouted aloud for joy in the Lord for he knew in that moment that the soul of his son had been liberated from the slavery of sin: that the matchless touch of Jesus had wrought a miracle in his life which should bring a return to domestic happiness and the reconstruction of a life and a home.

Prejudice! Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? They are still asking it. It is still unanswered. *The only full answer God ever gives*

to prejudice is Jesus. I have not time to go on with it. I am persuaded that the great danger in America to-day—it was the danger of Palestine in that day—is the unremitting prejudice of man against man and of man against truth—racial prejudice, religious prejudice, bigotry, national prejudice, social and political prejudice; prejudices that divide men into factions; labor at the throat of capital and capital on the neck of labor; personal prejudices that turn men into beasts of prey and victims of their evil passions and desires. How will the prejudices of this world be settled? How, in the name of God, will a man ever be heard for what he says, and not be misquoted for what somebody thinks he meant? How will the truth ever be known about a man who is doing his best to win the world to a safe path, the path of truth and righteousness? How will the church of Christ ever deliver itself from its slave manacles of time serving until it comes to break the chains of prejudice?

Jesus broke down all prejudice; He blasted out the middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile, making the two one. He breaks down the middle wall of partition between God and man, dispels darkness and ignorance and fills the world with the light of God. He speaks to Peter on the housetop in Joppa, saying, "Peter, arise and fling away your prejudice." The race problem is mine. The problem of religion is mine. No sin in the universe is so great as the sin of misunder-

standing God and missing the right path as revealed in the gospel of the Son of God. Lay aside prejudice. Find fellowship with God through faith in Christ. Enter into fellowship with the Son of God and find in him that fellowship with men of like faith, the outcome of which is inevitably and always spiritual and social enlightenment, enrichment and enlargement.

II

The Word of the Forerunner.

THE Gospel of John, in its initial aspects at least, purports to be a series of introductions of the Lord Jesus Christ. The author of the Gospel provides his own introduction in the prologue recorded in the first eighteen verses. He then introduces John the Baptist, who in turn introduces Jesus—John 1:19 to 36. His first disciples give their testimony of introduction in John 1:37 to 51. God the Father lends his attestation in the first miracle at Cana—John 2. Then there is an introduction through an interview with Nicodemus recorded in John 3. Next there is an introduction through an interview with the woman at the Well of Sychar in John 4. Again the Father intervenes in some signs, renewing his introduction of the second chapter in chapters five and six. Finally Jesus proclaims himself the Bread of Heaven, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Suffering Servant—the Lord and Master proclaiming his eternity in chapter eight.

Perhaps the most formal of all this series of introductions is that by John the Baptist. His was in answer to a formal delegation officially ap-

pointed from the Jews, that is, the Jewish leaders. A commission of priests and Levites from Jerusalem came to ask John who he was, suggesting that he might be Elias or that prophet. John denied any unusual character to himself, claiming only to be a herald and a messenger. But he gave emphatic testimony to the unique character of Jesus and he based this testimony upon certain evidence. He had had a heavenly revelation that he should see the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove and abiding upon someone among the innumerable hosts who came to his baptism and attended upon his ministry. This Person was beforehand designated to him as the Son of God. Being the Son of God John declares him to be the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, and one who should baptize in the Holy Spirit.

THE CUMULATIVE VOICE OF PROPHECY.

The testimony of John is definite, direct and takes character from the witness. Who and what then is John? What is the value of his testimony? Later Jesus has a word to say about John which is very illuminating. Recognizing the tremendous popularity which drew multitudes out of their city and suburban residences to attend upon his ministry on the banks of the Jordan, Jesus asks these pertinent questions: "Who is this man who draws the multitude after him? Is he a time-server, a reed shaken by the wind? Is he one who shifts his course by every wind of doctrine, gain-

ing popularity by conformity to the popular? Does he undertake to please the multitude in order to lead the multitude?" His very dress precludes the possibility of such a conception of John. He is not clothed in soft raiment. He is not trained in the sycophancy of courts. He is not used to the habit of taking the way of least resistance. His lips are not familiar with flattery. He is of the rugged Elijah type, not clothed in soft raiment, but wearing a garment of camel's hair. He presents the stern, uncompromising ruggedness of the desert man, whose eyes are clearer, whose mind is saner, who lifts his shoulders like a great rock in the wilderness, whose shade furnishes rest and opportunity for recovery to smaller men.

Is he then a prophet? Yes, and more than a prophet. Yet Jesus said no greater prophet was ever born than John. Greater than the greatest and more. He was the promised Forerunner of the King of kings, a messenger announcing the presence of royalty, himself of small significance while his message was of eternal import. How could he be more than a prophet? John himself supplies the answer and its significance: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness make straight the ways of the Lord." Just a voice! John sees himself as a personality stripped of everything which gives character to a man except voice. He had no place, no property, no precedence among men. He is not a man of affairs, nor of social contacts, nor of diplomatic

offices. Doubtless his generation pronounced him a man of very great limitations. But with all that he was a commissioned man, a dedicated man, with a message, a ministry, and an unfaltering master passion. He is the type of man who may lose his head, but will never lose his testimony. *He is the cumulative voice of all prophecy.* He is a forty candlepower man with a million candlepower capacity. That is, he sets himself as a small light at the center of the cone of prophecy and adds to his own ray the cumulative radiance of all the light of prophecy concerning this one supreme figure upon whom that light focuses on the banks of the Jordan; just as a small incandescent at the center of the conical reflector in the head light of a locomotive flings a glow of light on the track miles in advance of its approach. To change the figure John makes himself a sounding board for all the voices which ever promised the coming of a Saviour. Peter on Pentecost speaking to the assembled multitudes, reminding them of the promise of Joel concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit, with dramatic tensity declared "This is that." So John gathering up the cumulative voices of prophecy concerning the Coming One constantly announces on the banks of the Jordan, "This is he of whom Moses and the prophets did write." Thus he focuses the light and the voice of prophecy upon the *One Central Figure of all time.*

THE COMPREHENSIVE SACRIFICE.

In introducing Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world John gathers up into one all the sacrifices of the Old Testament in symbol and in significance. There are three kinds of sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament, all types of Christ. That is, each is typical of some feature of the messianic life and mission. They are:

1. Sin offering, which is expiatory, atoning and substitutionary.
2. Burnt offering, which is dedicatory and indicative of entire self surrender to God.
3. Peace offerings, which are eucharistic, voicing thanksgiving and demonstrating fellowship or communion. These are the expressions of the life of faith and the standing of the believer.

Now all these offerings, sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering—were "bleeding sacrifices." That is, atonement, sanctification and communion were all based upon the blood shed for sinners. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Consequently, without the shedding of blood there can be no approach to God and no fellowship with him on the part of the sinner.

Various animals were used in these bleeding sacrifices—bulls, goats, sheep and fowls. Ordinarily the various types of offering were presented on

separate occasions and at different times. But there was one place in which all three sacrifices —sin, burnt and peace offerings—used the lamb, and presented the three offerings in conjunction, as in the offerings of a Nazarite described in the sixth chapter of Numbers. Here were required a lamb of the first year without blemish for the burnt offering, a ewe lamb of the first year for the sin offering, and a ram without blemish for the peace offering. The last, of course, was coupled with the basket of unleavened bread, the cakes of fine flour made with oil, the wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offerings and their drink offerings.

Now a Nazarite was one made holy by a voluntary holy relation to God. But that relation was based upon the shedding of blood—hence we have in the Nazarite a perfect type of the saint, or the Christian, brought into the relation of a child of God through the atonement wrought out by Christ and the sanctification of the Christian, accomplished by the indwelling Spirit of God, which was given on the basis of the blood atonement. Now John was a Nazarite, therefore the offering of the Nazarite was his offering, and while there can be no doubt that his description of Jesus as the Lamb of God was a description guided and indicted by the Holy Spirit, there is no reason for assuming that it was not a description suggested to him by his own religious experi-

ence in the offerings of the Nazarite. He must have understood that salvation from sin meant atonement or the cleansing from sin by God, the life yielded to the control of God by the Holy Spirit, and the life of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when he proclaims Jesus to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, it is a comprehensive proclamation of a Saviour who should remove the barrier of sin, accomplish the dedication of life, and reveal himself in the establishment and experience of fellowship between the redeemed and his God. How deep the significance of John's word becomes when viewed in this light. How comprehensive is the designation, "Lamb of God." It fully satisfies all the Old Testament types and symbols in the one Person who in himself fills them all, thus satisfying the demands of a holy God and the needs of a sinful people.

THE CONTINUOUS THEME OF REDEMPTION.

Now the continuous theme of redemption is typified in the lamb. Prophecy had other functions than to proclaim redemption. That is, it had incidental messages and occasional programs and interests. Prophecy had indeed a near application and a far application. Some of its utterances were of local application but not of local completion. Prophecy did concern itself with ethical standards, social customs and political constitutions. But these were incidental to and conse-

quent upon its main theme of a holy people dwelling in a holy land, redeemed by a holy God to a life of holiness and fellowship with himself. There were certain by-products of the prophetic office and message, but the thesis of prophecy from beginning to end was *redemption.* The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent brood. The sacrificial lamb offered by Abel was to take precedence over the first fruits of Cain. Isaac was to be rescued from the altar by the lamb providentially provided and caught in the bushes. The whole Aaronic priesthood with its multitudinous offices and offerings hinges upon the day of atonement. The blood of bulls and the ashes of heifers, the blood of goats, of lambs and rams, of doves and pigeons, the burning of incense, the offering of the shewbread, the laver within the Temple, the clean linen, the ceremonial cleansing from defilement by people and priests, all pointed with unvarying finger toward the purpose of God in the forgiveness and restoration of the people to fellowship with God, and the re-enthronement of God in their individual, social and political life.

Sacrifices had other aspects than those which relate directly to redemption in its comprehensive fulness. Other animals than the lamb were used, as for instance in the high priestly ceremony of atonement described in Leviticus 16.

There were occasional and often incidental offerings, as for the cleansing of a leper, himself the most perfect type of the sinner in the grip

and power of sin, but the *lamb alone was to be offered twice daily throughout all their generations, once in the morning and once in the evening upon the altar whose fires were never allowed to abate.* These were indeed the burnt offerings of the people which indicated total surrender to God on the part of the people and God dwelling among his people in response to their yielded lives. Exodus 39:29f.

So the one cumulative, progressive, continuous theme of the law and the prophets is the taking away of sin, the restoration of fellowship with God. Redemption has to do with the removal of the world's spiritual infection and the consequent restoration of man to normal life in harmony with God and the re-enforcement of that life enabling the sinner to maintain a perfect and unbroken harmony with God.

There are, of course, incidental and occasional aspects of Christ's ministry as there are by-products of his presence and his gospel in the world, but permanently and essentially he was manifested to put away sin. It was for that that God made his soul an offering. It was for that that his body was broken on Calvary, so that "he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we having died unto sin might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed. It was for that "he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Thus "the blood

of Jesus, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin," since "He died for our sins according to the scriptures."

In closing permit an illustration to show first the need of sin's removal.

"A farmer showing his orchard to a visitor acknowledged with appreciation the visitor's pleasure and approval of all his well kept trees. He said, 'But if you wish to see a tree that is a tree, come this way.' He then directed his visitor to the back of the field and showing him a fine plum-tree loaded with fruit of the most delicious character—and the tree was heavily loaded—the farmer declared it was like that every year. Other trees had off seasons, but this one never failed. The visitor thought the farmer must give this particular tree extra care because he had never heard of such a tree before. But the farmer replied that he only gave it a little pruning once in a while. Then he went on to relate that the tree, or rather its root, had a history. He told of his anger at first upon finding in the middle of the field a tree growing which bore only wild fruit, utterly unfit for use. It looked all right, but its fruit was wild and hard and sour. So he chopped down the tree, but it grew up again and again produced the same useless fruit. He chopped it down a second and a third time and it still sent up shoots to reproduce its vicious fruit. Then the farmer said, well, if this tree has such vitality in its hard, sour and bitter fruit, why cannot it be turned

to a better purpose? It had better be doing something worth while." So he got a graft from a good tree, cut the plum-tree and placed the graft in and left it to do what his visitor saw it was doing, bearing each season branches loaded with fruit, sweet, delicious, profitable.

Therein lies a parable. The wild life of humanity, with all its vitality, produces only the carnal fruit of worldliness. Jesus comes to lay the axe at the root of the tree to cut down the whole worthless fabric and to destroy the fruit of sin, the works of the devil. But he will graft on to the root of humanity, from the good stock of God by the Holy Spirit, a new life which will flower and fruit in righteousness and bring forth the spiritual fruits thereof to the glory of God and the redemption of humanity.

Next I would illustrate the method of redemption by two very simple incidents.

First a modern application of the Master's parable which provoked from the Pharisees the query "Who is my neighbor?" A newspaper relates the incident. "There was a line of men at the teller's window of a certain bank. One of them having handed in his check was rather abruptly asked by the teller if he had any way of being identified. Greatly embarrassed the man replied that he had not and was curtly informed that his check could not be cashed without proper identification. Very much disconcerted and with a sense of lost respect he was turning away from

the window when the man next in line said: "This is my neighbor, Mr. A. Certainly he is good for any amount of any check he would present. Let me have the check." And he immediately wrote his name in endorsement without even looking at the amount written on its face. Thus when we appear before God and find ourselves with no standing with him and are ready to be turned away to suffer eternal loss, it is our heavenly Neighbour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who writes his name in endorsement upon our application for mercy, and we enter upon that Name into the riches of grace and glory.

That, however, does not quite actually illustrate.

Here then is another I have read: "The worst boy in the district" was an appellation connected with a boy in New York City. Mischief turning into crime brought him often into trouble with the law and its officers. The old mother insisted that the boy was not a bad boy, since she herself paid his fines, stood between him and the law, worked for him, provided for him, cared for him, and loved him in spite of all his failures and faults. There came a time when the old mother was stricken with blindness. Then to the intense amazement of all the district the boy suddenly sobered and settled down, worked hard, and tenderly cared for his old mother. Love had won its battle, but love never lost sight of the fact that love must pay the price. It is said that as

the old mother was dying, in her last moments she was heard to utter, "Don't send him to jail, I will pay his fine." We cannot but be reminded of that great word which declared "God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Not that we first loved him, but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We are saved from the present sense of despair as well as from the guilt and damnation of sin by the fact that Jesus paid our fine.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim—
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calvary's Lamb.

In conclusion we need but to remind ourselves that the debt of our obligation to God having all been discharged in Christ, the way of access back to God having been opened through Christ, and the assurance of the mercy of God having been guaranteed by Christ, we may all come boldly even now to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and find help for our present need. The atonement is offered to the whole world. It is efficacious only to those who receive him. The gospel message is therefore a savour of life unto life to those who believe, but of death unto death to those who dis-

believe. God's mercy, as also his minister, calls you to "behold the Lamb of God" ready to take away your sin now. What is your answer to his offered mercy?

III

The Word of the Father.

THERE is an eternal importance in the introductions of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John. These introductions as John stages them are all in keeping with the whole spirit and purport both of John's Gospel and his Epistles. They lay great insistence upon the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. One cannot read John without being convinced that in his mind the Holy Spirit puts supreme emphasis on Jesus. He is identified at the mouth of many witnesses. His work is definitely specified and the mission for which he came is specifically declared. In all this the figure of the Man of Nazareth towers above all.

One scarcely glances at a messenger at the door. It is enough that he wears the uniform and bears the message. Indeed the messenger is of little importance; the message is all important. But when an ambassador from one government to another bears a message to the government to which he is accredited, he is required to present his credentials and then to identify himself as the person to whom they were issued. But here the credentials and the message play quite as much part as the ambassadorial messenger himself, though the

person of the ambassador is of far more concern than the person of a mere messenger, or courier.

But if a king is to ascend the throne everything hinges upon his person and his relations. He must be of the royal line. He must be in line of succession. He must embody in himself all those relations of family which enable the government to head up in him. The office he occupies and the mission upon which he appears determine the relative importance of his person. If his is a petty kingdom and no great national or international questions are dependent upon the royal family and the royal prerogatives, then it is not a matter of so great moment that the proper person properly accredited should be upon the throne, though often here to the subjects involved in the kingdom this is of paramount importance. But the importance of the person and the attestations of his qualifications for the throne increase with the importance of the throne which he is to occupy.

From this consideration it can be seen readily that it is of supreme and enduring importance that the world should be satisfied about the Person of Jesus Christ. For the scriptures declare him to be, and the church has ever received him, as the one and only Mediator between God and men, the one possible Daysman between heaven and earth, and also the only person in the universe qualified to sit upon the throne of the King of kings, and to exercise universal authority as Lord of lords. Is this Jesus that one? Is he able to accomplish his

mission of re-establishing the throne of God in the earth and to make his kingdom a reality in the midst of men? Is Jesus the one who is able to obtain and to occupy the throne of God in the permanent establishment of the dynasty promised by God to the House of David? In answer to this question John the author introduces him to be God the Son, Author of light, Giver of grace, Source of life.

Then we have seen also that John the Baptist identifies this Jesus as the Son of God, and as the Lamb of God, Saviour of men. But our acquaintance with the Revelation indicates that when John the Baptist introduces him as the Lamb of God, he still leaves room for the ascriptions of royalty which belong, and can belong, only to God the Son, because the Seer of Patmos finds a Lamb on the throne and it is a Lamb which had been slain but is alive forevermore.

But neither the testimony of John the Apostle nor John the Baptist concerning this Jesus is deemed sufficient. There is a far higher authority to whom appeal is made. *God the Father* appears upon the scene and after various manners bears his witness to Jesus, identifying him by a method more nearly perfect than any Bertillon measurements as the very One to whom all prophecy runs and in whom the whole purpose of God is summed up.

Indeed, the testimony of the Father to the Son takes three forms:

First: The visible presence of the Holy Spirit.
Second: The working power of God in his life.
Third: The audible voice of God speaking from heaven testifying concerning, and identifying Jesus as the Son of God.

THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

John the Baptist bases his testimony of Jesus as the Son of God upon the fact that he had seen the Holy Spirit in bodily form as a dove descending upon Jesus in accordance with instructions which John had previously received. He does not tell us by what means his instructions came, but that they were clear and definite and divine in origin. He leaves us no doubt upon whom he should see the Spirit descending as a dove. That One he was to identify as the Son of God. He declares that he had seen that memorable and supernatural descent. He does not tell us when, but Matthew does in his third chapter, verses 16 and 17:

> "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And Mark confirms the testimony of Matthew in his first chapter, verses 9 to 11:

> "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him: and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

Now the significance of this is unmistakable. John the Baptist waits upon heaven to declare the presence of the Messiah. He announces as a forerunner the presence of the King. As to the person of that King he is told to wait until he discovers one sufficiently *en rapport* with God to attract the Spirit of God so vitally and visibly as to make himself the self-evident manifestation of Deity.

Bring a perfect conductor close enough to an active dynamo and you may see the electric spark leap from the dynamo to the conductor. It was thus John, forewarned and expectant, saw the Spirit of God come forth in bodily form from God on to Jesus the perfect spiritual Conductor. That is, he saw the outleaping of divine personality in response to the presence of this perfect personality. For Jesus alone in the perfection of his dual nature could bridge the chasm and bring the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. It happened to him here on the banks of the Jordan as it happened to his disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when in response to his

presence in them, the Holy Spirit came forth upon them. That will perhaps explain why non-Christian men neither do nor can receive the Holy Spirit, however fine morally they may be. Until Jesus Christ is received within the heart there can be to them no communication of the Holy Spirit and they are left unenlightened in that darkness in which the whole world lies in the evil one.

HIS PERSONALITY.

After all, the supreme appeal of Jesus to men, and to God, if one may so express it, is his personality. There is a challenge of Jesus little taken account of, but in one of the most critical and challenging hours of his earthly experiences recorded as it is in the 14th chapter of John's Gospel wherein he is trying to prepare his disciples for his departure and the consequent need for his subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit, another Paraclete, in passionate earnestness he pleads with them: *"Believe me, or else believe me for the very works' sake."* It is as if he had said: "Let what I am become the supreme reason for your faith. Let my personality grip you, command you, create within yourselves a spiritual response to the presence of the Holy Spirit, within me. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Surely men who yield to the Spirit will yield to me."

Belief upon evidence is not the highest, nor the most lasting faith. That may be purely in-

tellectual assent. But saving faith is the restful trust of the heart rather than an assent of the mind. Nicodemus appears in the history of the Master's self-revelation as an exception to the group from which he came. John 2:23-25.

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

But there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews who, acting upon the intellectual conviction born out of the observance of the miracles performed by Jesus, came to make further inquiry and to confess with due prudence and caution his faith. Jesus required of him a spiritual rebirth which would enable him to take hold of the eternal verities revealed in the personality of the Master himself. We hear from Nicodemus again but no more in connection with the performance of wonders. We see him next under the shadow of the cross within the direct shadow of the tomb standing up for the man Jesus. Upon such an occasion there can be no higher test of personal loyalty and devotion. The highest and most lasting faith is that which springs spontaneously out of the soul to greet Jesus. Deep calls unto deep. Spirit answers to spirit. Love at first sight is ideal love. Two personalities mutually complement each other and therefore by

a natural reaction each to the other find union. So do some souls respond to Jesus. So always the Holy Spirit in man to the Holy Spirit in Jesus, or upon Jesus. Thus it was that the first disciples left all to follow him. Whether they came from the fishermen's nets or the tax-gatherer's seat, or from the schoolroom of meditation, or from the haunts of sin they heard the voice of Jesus, and listening, at once left all to follow him. How beautiful the faith that requires no compulsion or persuasion!

THE WORKING POWER OF GOD.

God gives signs to aid weak faith and to encourage the hesitant to take hold of that which is for them hidden in the veil of his human body and life. This was the manner of his many miracles for we are told in Acts 2:22 that he was approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him. Also it is recorded in John 2:11, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." That is to say, probably their faith in him was confirmed for they were the group who had heretofore yielded to the charm of his personality. The voice which was to them as the sound of many waters had in it the quality of eternity, also, that spoke to their souls with a note of divine and imperative authority. So his miracles only confirmed their faith whereas for others they were the beginnings of faith, the

proof of Deity. Men would have less difficulty with the miracles of the Bible if they understood their purpose and considered that the reason for, and the value of, the miracles lies in their witness to Christ as the Son of God. Every effort to discredit the miracles of the New Testament is an effort to invalidate the revelation of the deity of Jesus Christ. Men who enthrone Jesus Christ as Lord find no difficulty in the supernatural element of the scriptures or in the records of miracles wrought by his hands.

THE AUDIBLE VOICE SPEAKS.

But God does not stop with signs and wonders, *He speaks! Men hear him!* We do not record here the fact that in their inmost souls meditative men hear the sound of a gentle stillness and know thereby the presence of God, when fire and wind and earthquake do not bear conscious witness to his presence. We speak rather of the audible voice with which men hear each other speak. Here is personality communicating with personality by the ordinary means of human language, heard and understood by the ordinary sense with which man receives sound and interprets it in his seat of intelligence or conscience. There were three of these audible voices.

First at his baptism. There God attested his deity: "This is my Son, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased." Nothing could more perfectly convey the idea of unity, of natural harmony of

being, and satisfactory intercommunication of life. Whatever else men may discredit in relation to the deity of Christ, none can escape the conviction that Jesus was assured within himself of his perfect unity with the Father, and that the Father was assured of his perfect unity with Jesus the Son. Each makes explicit declaration of this unity. So at the mouth of two trustworthy witnesses the fact is established. God the Father says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus answers, "I and the Father are one." I do not wonder that John affirms that they who reject the testimony of God concerning the Son make God a liar and shut in their own faces the gateway to eternal life. For this is the record that God hath borne, that he has given unto us eternal life and this life is in his Son. I John 5:11.

The second occasion on which God spoke with audible voice was in that crucial hour when the Greeks came desiring to see Jesus. Jesus has prayed that the Father would glorify himself in him. Then there came a voice which the people interpreted variously as the voice of an angel and the voice of thunder, but which others understood to be the voice of God, and the words were, "I have both glorified my name and will glorify it again." Thus acknowledging to Jesus, and for Jesus, that self-communicable personality of God, which voiced its expression in the person of his Son. For glory, is to God, as emanations of

light are to the sun. Jesus is the fulness of the Godhead bodily manifest. He is that Servant of God of whom Isaiah writes: "Thou art my servant Israel through whom I will break forth into glory."

Once again on the Mount of Transfiguration the Father speaks and men hear the testimony concerning his Son, and in this testimony he reveals and establishes the supreme Lordship of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." He it is to whom all authority in heaven and in earth is given. He it is to whom is given the promise recorded in the second Psalm: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He it is whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion as king. He it is who, because he did not count it a prize to be on equality with God, emptied himself, taking upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." There on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus appears supreme in the realm of law, for Moses disappears from the scene, and Jesus remains. There also he appears supreme in the realm of ethics, for Elijah, having appeared, disappears, but Jesus

IV

The Word of the Baptizer.

THE ministry of John the Baptist consisted of a *message,* a *symbol* and an *identification.*

The *message* was a demand for the repentance which contemplated a complete reversal of the entire attitude of life toward God and the attendant correction of evil conduct flowing inevitably from a wrong relation to God.

The *symbol* was baptism—a vital, significant rite administered to those who publicly confess their repentance. The symbol and the rite as administered by John uniformly proclaim death to the old life as lived in a state of impenitence; and a resurrection to the new life proceeding out of a proper adjustment of relation to God.

His *identification* of Jesus as the Son of God was vitally connected with his doctrine of repentance and his rite of baptism. The vital message of the new régime was "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Thus he anticipated the vital message of the gospel which proclaimed repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through him by the atonement wrought in his death, that men die unto sin; and it is through him by the Spirit of God communi-

until his completion of the atonement wrought on the cross and his ascension into heaven, where he obtained and shed forth the Holy Spirit as seen on Pentecost. This is further indicated from John 7:37, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Now John the Baptizer claims two things as revealed to him about Jesus the Son of God.

First: The atoning work of Jesus is provided in his death. Here is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Second: The life-giving mediation of Jesus as provided in his gift of the Holy Spirit. Both of these facts as revealed by John are exemplified on Pentecost. There it appears that Jesus the great High Priest, having borne the blood of the covenant shed on Calvary into the holy place in heaven, makes atonement for the sins of the people, and upon the basis of his completed atonement obtains by asking, and sheds forth the Holy Spirit upon the waiting disciples. This was according to his promise recorded in John 14:15-18: "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for-

functioning. It is not resuscitation from apparent death. It is resurrection from the dead. The life which Jesus gives in the communication of the Holy Spirit is the life in which death plays a significant part. This life is a new birth. Spring with its recurring miracle of resurrection is no adequate illustration either of the resurrection or of the impartation of life through the Holy Spirit. The miracle of spring is only the seasonal resurgence of a quiescent life; a resurgence which proceeds by perfectly natural and normal life processes. The miracle of the resurrection which finds its spiritual counterpart and illustration in the miracle of regeneration is more perfectly illustrated in the transformation of fruit juice into wine by processes of fermentation. Something died in the juice and out of that death a new quality is imparted to the juice which becomes, by that impartation, wine. Here then is life in the production of which death is itself involved and between which and its former condition death stands as a permanent and impassable barrier. For when the fermentation has completed the transformation of the juice into wine, the wine is forevermore beyond the process of fermentation, or death. It is life, life emerged out of death. So Jesus in his post-resurrection announcement declares: "I am he who was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore." To which the Spirit adds this in Romans 6:9: "Knowing that Christ being raised

SEPARATION BY DEATH.

When Jesus baptized in the Spirit he no longer lived in the flesh. That statement is far more important than can be made to appear in its utterance. Between the life he had lived in the flesh, and the life he now lives, there is the impassable barrier of death. But the life he lives now is a life which emerges out of death with the power of an endless life inherent in it. In his earthly life Jesus appears as a teacher. He is so addressed by his disciples. He appears also as a great exemplar. He declares himself to be such to his disciples. He appears as King to the Jews. He is so born and he so dies. He is an itinerant prophet but death intervenes and all that ends with death. Therefore Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:16: "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more." *It was the resurrection which made Christ the life-giving Spirit.* Even the body which he brought forth from the grave is no longer supported by natural processes through the blood, but is sustained by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45.)

A MUTUAL EXPERIENCE.

In receiving the Holy Spirit we share with Jesus the experience both of his death and his resurrection. The Lamb of God takes away sin. We died

rating us from the life lived in the energy of the flesh, as a source of supply, as a realm of activity and as a seat of government. The old life perishes when we put Christ between us and it. As an army cut off from its base of food supply, or from its water supply, must inevitably be defeated, so the Christian, who lives in conscious realization of the place of the cross in his life, will cut off from his life and defeat in his life the forces and powers and principles operating under the god of this world in the old carnal life to which he was once subjected.

Every gardener knows that a tree ringed around dies. The common assumption is that the severance of the bark causes death by cutting off the sap ascending from the root of the tree. That, however, is not true. The sap does not ascend from the bark but through the fiber of the tree. The death is caused by prohibiting the return of the sap through the bark to the earth, thus preventing circulation and purification. Let the Christ ring any life around as regards the world and though the world may continue to send its resources into the life of the Christian, so long as the Christian makes no return of faith, dependence, or appropriation, the world will die out in his life. Here is for us the new life with its new power, its new program, and its new governing principles. "For to me to live is Christ" and "It is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me." Let us write of ourselves, even as it was written

of Christ in Romans 6:7-11: "For he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we die in Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once for all: but the life that he liveth he liveth unto God. *Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.*"

V

The Word of the First Disciples.

VITAL faith in Christ Jesus begets an immediate and irresistible impulse to confess him to others. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All personal experience of Christ at once makes imperative as life's constant theme the good tidings of salvation. The logic of faith is: what he is to me, he may become to others. The motive in faith is an overflowing love that would share its blessings with others. Energy in faith is directed toward bearing its message to others. To all believers he is at once the greatest person and the most compelling interest in the universe. Here is the law of spiritual compulsion: "We believe therefore we speak."

Faith is the basis of all true spiritual knowledge. "I know whom I have believed." Belief in Christ is confirmed by knowledge of Christ but spiritual comprehension of Christ begins always with faith in Christ. He cannot be known until he is received. He cannot be received and not be known. He both commits and communicates himself to those who commit themselves to him. The testimony upon which his first disciples received by

faith Jesus as the Messiah was of the simplest. At least the record does not complicate the bare testimony of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit, even fire." But certainly there must have been some complication of this simplest statement. At any rate, the first uttered testimony of faith bears upon it the evidence of careful research, profound meditation, coupled with a due sense of responsibility for the conclusions reached. The first two followed him on the testimony of John. These were probably John the Apostle and Andrew. Andrew first finds his own brother Simon Peter and greets him with this testimony about Jesus: "We have found the Messiah." The next day Jesus finds Philip and wins him to discipleship. But the urge which had been in the heart of Andrew quickly becomes a tide in the heart of Philip. He finds Nathanael and greets him with the amazing statement: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." *We have found him.* Even across the centuries the note of joyousness leaps out to us from the inspired record. Now these words suggest to the thoughtful mind three things:

1. That there had been a search.
2. That the search had been successful.
3. That the successful search has a sequel.

THE SEARCH.

The men of many centuries and of many lands had been seeking. Something was missing from human experience. Someone was missing from the world. Humanity was like sheep without a shepherd. Blind peoples were everywhere following blind leaders. Burdened, oppressed and distressed multitudes of the world were wearying for a deliverer. That yearning and that searching were intensest in Israel. Through their lawgivers and prophets they had known most clearly the character of the one who was to come and the intent and purpose for which he was to come, the spiritual import of his presence. Among the multitude of materialists, rationalists and ritualists whose spiritual tides were at their lowest ebb, whose spiritual visions were dullest, there were yet a few upon the altars of whose hearts the living fires still burned, and in whose spiritual vision a flame of faith still glowed. Spiritual apprehension made them aware that the centuries were converging upon their day, and that some portentous event must announce the presence of the long expected one.

Luke 3:15 declares: "All men were in expectation." Thus we find the aged Simeon waiting in the Temple ready to receive into his arms the child Jesus when he was brought to the Temple for his dedication. His faith and expectation are voiced thus: "He blessed God and said, Now

lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord, According to thy word, in peace; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; A light for revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of thy people Israel." So also Anna the prophetess: "And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." Thus also the wise men of the East, long in expectant meditation, were able to discern the star of Bethlehem and follow it to where the new born babe of Bethlehem lay cradled in a manger. The unspeakable Herod, jealous for his throne, and suspicious of all possible claimants, is keenly alive to their presence and takes immediate and cruel measures to destroy the King of the Jews.

Messianic prophecies had followed the path of human frailty, folly and failure from that day in the Garden, when God gave promise to woman that her Seed should bruise the serpent's head. Prophets and seers had foretold his coming, poets and bards had sung of him and his reign, till every Jewish maiden carried hidden in her heart, as her dearest hope and most prized inspiration, the dream that perhaps she might become the mother of her Lord and cradle in her arms the Messiah of her nation. Old Testament inspiration closes with the message of Malachi the Messenger: "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." No wonder expectation had

reached its climax. Little marvel that the eyes of the world were turned to *the land and the people* of the living God, or that the expectant hope was ready to voice itself from waiting hearts through willing lips. This attitude of mind on the part of the people explains perhaps the ready response that four hundred men made to Theudas in his revolt against Roman authority; or the readiness with which Barabbas was able to make an insurrection in the midst of which he committed murder; or the appeal which John the Baptist made to the multitudes who went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea to the banks of the Jordan to hear his message of the Kingdom.

It is reported that some years ago a young Japanese student, to whom had been given a copy of the Old Testament, found sufficient interest to read it through. When he had finished the Book of Malachi he looked up to his teacher and friend with a profound interest depicted upon his face and exclaimed: "Where is he?" On being asked by his teacher whom he meant he said. "Some great one is coming; who is he, where is he?" That, then, was the expectant attitude of men when Jesus appeared upon the scene.

THE WORLD IN NEED.

The world is in need and in hope. The world without Christ is like a family with the father absent. There is a sense of loss, of incomplete-

ness, when he is not there. A widow whose husband I had just buried said to me recently: "I cannot understand why he was taken. Oh, he was needed in this family." Exactly! That was the feeling of the world before Christ came and it is the feeling of the world now though men do not know whom they seek. Oh, he is needed in this world!

Or a world without Christ is like a church with a greatly beloved pastor absent. Others may speak, interesting personalities may come and go, but there is a missing in the hearts of the people for the voice of their shepherd, for the familiar and kindly voice, for his abiding interest and understanding.

Or such a world is like a picture with the central figure left out. It is a world incomplete, unsatisfied, seeking, seeking, seeking! So is the world now. So is the world now whenever and wherever he, the Christ, is absent. So it is among the people to whom he is not given—the Asiatics, the Africans, the residents in the islands of the sea. So it is among those institutions and philosophies in which he is not recognized. How incomplete are those human governments in which he has no place. When the League of Nations was formed without him somehow the heart of the world understood that it was to fail. The world philosophies that take no account of him; the science and scientists who ignore him are incomplete, unsatisfying, dreary in their drab, un-

proven, and unfinished formulas. Ethics without him is like a marble statue, perfect in form but without life and power. Life itself without Christ is like a meal without salt, a house without light. Our souls were made for him, and they are restless till they find him. Like Sir Galahad in search of the Holy Grail, or Perseus in search of the Golden Fleece, we seek him. The deepest, profoundest, truest longings of humanity's heart are voiced in the words of the Greeks to Philip on one memorable day: "We would see Jesus." For somehow there is a world consciousness, whether we will or not, that in Jesus are summed up the blessings of God and the hopes of humanity.

THE SUCCESS OF THE SEARCH.

It is interesting to inquire concerning this One who is the personal and incarnate expression of the something for which humanity had longed and searched. To what spiritual Bertillon measurements must he conform? To what identification must he be subjected? How may the world know that this One is he for whom impatient hearts have waited and expectant souls have longed?

Well, the One looked for and longed for must be of divine appointment and of divine authority. Moses the great lawgiver in forbidding all trust in all other mediators, or mediation, announced to the holy nation: "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, from thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall

hearken." There it is, the divine appointment, the divine authority! He the coming One was therefore to embody in himself all the characters of the Messiah and fulfil in himself all the Messianic hopes, born in Eden, developed through prophecy, accumulated by the nation of his people. Therefore within himself he is to be the vice regent of God ruling in a theocracy in the earth. He is to be Immanuel—God with us. As such, reigning King, he must be Protector of his people against their enemies, Provider for his people against their needs, and Mediator unto his people in their relation to God on whose behalf he appeared among men.

Through the centuries the world had been offered many substitutes—priests, prophets, lawgivers, kings—but somewhere and somehow all these had failed and the heart hunger of the world had remained. Somehow the goal had never been reached for humanity through any of them. It is true that some men had been content with some of the substitutes, but contentment does not spell satisfaction, rather say the contentment was the contentment of resignation in the despair of satisfaction. They had made themselves content with less than the attainment of their ideals. Like Paul under a noble inspiration they were constantly constrained to say: "We count not ourselves yet to have attained, but forgetting the failures that are behind we are pressing on." Thus Abraham in his despair of Isaac had been content

that Ishmael had been born and seemed likely to be his heir and successor to the covenant inheritance. He attained to his satisfaction in the promise and providence of God only when Isaac was causing laughter in the tent. Longfellow voices something of this in his "Excelsior." The youth climbs wearily up the mountain side. All that could be desired is offered—love and wealth and comfort. But while all these lure they do not satisfy and he presses on. *So the world would not be denied till it found him.* It is something of the pent-up longing of the centuries in which men, moved by the hope which springs eternal in the human breast, have searched and sought and sorrowed for the absent one, that breaks through in the enthusiastic cry of those first disciples—"We have found him."

The story is told of Archimedes the mathematician that when he at last discovered a long sought mathematical equation he was in the midst of his bath in Athens. So overjoyed was he with his discovery that he ran out in the street just he was, crying: "Eureka!" "I have found it!" So these early disciples seem to have lost sight of every other consideration than the search, conscious that at last for them and for all men this search of the centuries had ended. The longings of all people are at last to be satisfied and they go forth crying their Eureka—*We have found him, the Messiah.* We have found him of whom Moses in the law did write! We have found him of

whom the prophets wrote! We have found him who satisfies the heart and completes the experience of men everywhere! They were like the man who recently came down from the first balcony of this church at the close of a Sunday evening service, first to settle the matter of his faith and then to make public confession of that faith in the Lord Jesus. In the course of his personal statement he said: "I have been a moral man all my life through. I had persuaded myself that morality was enough, but for seven months now I have sat in this auditorium and heard the gospel preached. I now know that morality is not enough. I now know that nothing is enough without him and therefore I come now both to receive and to confess Jesus as Saviour and Lord." Ah well! Multitudes through all the centuries and in all lands have had the same experience. When at last they have reached Jesus they have realized that they have come to the end of the way, that their soul's search has been successful at last, for in him there is a great satisfaction and a great peace—a peace that passeth all understanding, for he is our peace with God.

THE SEQUEL OF THE SUCCESSFUL SEARCH.

The success of their search immediately produced the most amazing results. They followed him! Like steel to a magnet were they drawn and bound to him. Their souls seem to have found

their native element in him. Like ducklings commit themselves to the water upon their first approach to it, those early disciples seemed instinctively to know that that for which they had been born was realized in him. This, too, in spite of the fact that their teachers and rulers, their companions and friends, looked upon their response to Jesus with the utmost distress and indignation. These were like hens who lead their brood of ducklings to the water's edge and, utterly unable to understand how the ducklings respond to the water, distress themselves in an overwhelming anxiety lest they should be destroyed by it.

But not only did they follow Jesus, *they left all to follow him.* One day in discussing the sacrifice he required with his disciples, Jesus is reminded by Peter: "Lord, we have left all to follow thee." So also was Paul moved. In the third chapter of Philippians he writes: "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Perhaps it would be worth while for us to glance once again over the things that Paul discards and counts loss or refuse, all as of no value in comparison to his high and heavenly privilege of knowing Jesus as Lord. Here then is the list:

> Confidence in the flesh.
>
> An Israelite circumcised the eighth day, not an Ishmaelite who was circumcised the thirteenth year.

Of the stock of Israel, not a halfbreed of Esau.

Of the tribe of Benjamin, therefore belonging to the loyal group who were faithful to the Davidic dynasty when the ten tribes revolted against Solomon's son.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews, therefore giving no assent to the liberalism of the Hellenistic group.

A Pharisee, orthodox in his acceptance of the entire scriptures, not a rationalistic Sadducee who received only the Pentateuch.

A zealous devotee of the Jewish faith to the extent of persecuting the church.

In his personal life blameless.

But when he found Jesus and the privilege of knowing him, he gladly threw all race, religion and his heritage of ancestry, pride and self-sufficiency upon the scrap-heap. He also left all for Jesus as must we when we come to him.

They found all desire in him. They followed him. They left all for him. They found all satisfaction in him. How completely the sequel of life is written for all disciples of Christ in that brief summary—to come to Jesus, to follow Jesus, to lose all for Christ, to find all in Christ!

One day when Jesus had made an issue with the multitude about himself the fearful ones in great trepidation and in something of disgust, abandoned him. They did not understand his claims

and so repudiated them. Jesus turned to the Twelve and with something akin to an infinite pathos asked—one cannot escape the note of infinite wistfulness in his tone—"Will ye also go away?" All the mistakes of Peter can be forgiven for the sake of his answer that came to the Master that day from the impulsiveness of an enthusiastic faith that understands and does not falter nor shrink on the brink of any earthly loss: "Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life, to whom else can we go?" It was as if he had said: "All we have longed and looked for, all we have desired and needed, we have found in thee."

So it has been with the martyrs who followed in his train. To them prisons, scourgings, crucifixions, stakes, boiling cauldrons of oil, burning fires of persecution were but a present and a light affliction in comparison with the eternal weight of glory revealed for them in Christ. So also the missionaries who love him and surrender friends and fortune to endure hardships among strange peoples of strange customs, to lay down their lives in unknown, unrecognized and often unrequited service. Jesus has become the darling of their souls, the object of their passionate devotion, for him the first flaming love burns with ever increasing warmth and radiance.

A man told me recently: "I cannot describe it, but when I think of him there is a thrill that comes through my body almost lifting the hair on my head." The man who said that was a teacher of

psychology in a modern university and yet above and beyond all the things he knew Jesus had laid a grip upon his soul and the Son of God had commanded a throne room of sovereignty in his life.

So also we when we have found him. Oh, yes! That is really the test of whether you have found him. Are you ready to follow him wheresoever he goes? Remembering that the birds of the air have nests, the beasts of the field their lairs, yet it is still true that the Son of Man has not where to lay his head. He will not tell you where he will lead you. You must consent at first to become a wanderer with him having no certain abiding place. He will leave you with no promise that you can settle, that you can have home, family, friends, and grow in their midst through youth and ripening age. He may not leave you the privilege of fortune, or place, or precedence among men. He may demand the supreme sacrifice. Are you willing to follow him? Are you ready to leave all for him? You cannot enter upon this warfare without counting the cost. Do you find it in him? Are you satisfied with Jesus every day? Does he comfort you sufficiently in your loneliness? Does he answer completely your questionings? Does he bring to you a satisfying sense of God? Do you rest upon his word? Do you rest in him? Have you found the end of your soul's journey in Jesus? Is he home to your heart?

Some years ago the wife of a western Congressman undertook to pray one night for her infidel

husband. As she pleaded that God would save him the Spirit of God asked her in her inmost soul's sanctuary this question: "Are you willing to pay the price necessary for your husband's conversion? Does Jesus sufficiently satisfy you for you to face the sequel of the answer to your prayer should it be an answer of peace?" After many hours of struggle she yielded herself so completely to Jesus by the Spirit as to find in him a satisfaction and a completeness, though she must surrender all else. At that time her husband was the leading politician of his State in line of succession in the dominant party for nomination as Governor, with prospects at least of ultimately being in succession for the presidency. Weeks later when he came home almost the first thing after their mutual greetings, the wife told her husband of her agony of prayer and of her struggle and of her final yielding all to the Master, and then poured out her very soul in an appeal to him to meet her on that ground of faith. He was strangely moved. He asked to be informed as to the exact date and hour of her previous spiritual experience of struggle and victory. He then undertook to look up an experience of his own. He discovered that the date of her soul travail corresponded exactly as to date and hour with a tremendous burden upon his own soul and a strange insistent consciousness of the presence of the God, whom he had denied, with him as he sat at his desk in the House of Representatives in Wash-

ington. So overwhelmed was he with the coincidence, as he at first called it, that he came at once under the power of a great conviction, and when he had yielded his all to her Saviour he related the experience. But it required self emptying on her part to bring him the first step of the way. And—he was never made governor. He never became president. He has long been an ambassador of Christ to men.

There lies a deep and inescapable lesson for us in the story. When we are willing to go all the way with Jesus, when we find in him full soul satisfaction and without reservation yield ourselves to him, we have already entered into the path of victory and of soul satisfying, enriching service.

To all those who find him Jesus always becomes sponsor as he did to the first disciples. He guards them against sin and delivers them from it. He takes away from them the power of death and delivers them from its fear. And he delivers them forevermore from a purposeless life, sets before them a heavenly goal and endues them with the power of a heavenly passion. These Galilean disciples became the messengers and apostles of the King of Heaven.

There is a story of an old Negro who had long been an exile from his Southern home in the cities of the North. He had had more respect from his Northern neighbors than he had ever seemed to have in the South. He had been treated with an external courtesy that somehow yet left him hun-

gry of heart. Also that courtesy sometimes failed to provide him with work and left him with no opportunity to appeal for charity. At last the hunger of his heart for his former environment and his old neighbors and friends took hold upon him with an irresistible urge. He started back South. His money gone, he was unable to buy transportation. He even wanted for food. He rang many front door bells in many towns and cities as he tramped his way on toward the South. At last he came weary, hungry, with worn clothing to Baltimore. He did not know the city to which he had come. He only knew the direction in which he was going. Driven by hunger he went to the front door of a stately house and rang the bell, expecting to ask for food. In response to the bell a gentleman appeared at the door and opening it looked at the woebegone Negro who stood before him. The old Negro trying again to accustom himself and his language to the mode of appeal so often employed in the North, began to ask for a little help. Suddenly the white man at the door interrupted him and said: "You black rascal, what are you doing at my front door? Go around to my kitchen and tell my cook to give you something to eat." In the telling that sounds like a harsh and cruel response, but back of it, and between the white man and the Negro, there was on his part an understanding and a sympathy, and on the part of the mendicant a sense of security and a realization of the opportunity to serve. At any

rate the old black face began to stream with tears, even while the old lips broke into a tremulous smile as he said: "Thank God, I have got home at last!" On the one hand understanding, sympathy and provision; on the other security and service.

I am wondering to-day if you have found your spiritual Baltimore. If you are willing with sufficient humility of heart not to demand the front door entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, but to go often to the kitchen door of the Master's table, if you are hungry enough, just to feed in the consciousness that when your soul is fed and your life is made secure within the providence of this divine Provider, you will by that token be qualified and equipped for the service that you will long to render and he which waits to receive.

VI

The Word of the First Confessor.

WHEN Jesus appeared upon the scene of his earthly ministry the whole nation became stirred with the agitation of a great discussion. It is not difficult to visualize the situation. It is easy to imagine the tremendous amount of emotion, the agitation of discussion, the turmoil of opinion.

There are those still living who can recall the tremendous political agitation attendant upon the Lincoln and Douglas debates of 1859-1860 when the fate of a nation was held in balance, when portentous issues impended, involving the secession of the States from the Union and the disruption of the national government. Many will recall the tremendous agitation which has centered in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Wherever men met they speculated, debated or came to a war of words over the issues involved. It is easy enough to stir a whole community or the people of an entire nation into a very fever of agitated discussion.

There was reason enough why this should have been so while the Lord Jesus was on the earth. John the Baptist with his austere message had gone forth preaching in the wilderness, calling

men to repentance. Multitudes had gone out from Jerusalem and all the cities to attend upon his ministry at Bethabara and on the banks of the Jordan and in the wilderness. He had not hesitated to rebuke a king, to proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. The crowds had listened and had been moved many times beyond themselves. The spectacular rite of baptism administered in the open had but added fuel to the fires of interest and discussion. Then John had been beheaded by Herod, incited as he had been by the capricious demand of Herodias whose imperial though selfish spirit could brook no interference with her career of self indulgence.

John being gone the crowds shifted easily to attend the ministry of Jesus. Not only was his message more stirring than John's had been but attendant upon his message and his ministry there had been a succession of spectacular events. Five thousand people had been fed on five loaves and two fishes broken in his hands. He had walked upon the water in the midst of a storm and by a breath had calmed both the angry winds and the raging waves. In response to John's commission of inquiry he had pointed to his ministry of healing. The sick were healed, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the lame were made to walk and the dead were raised. One day he had walked into the Temple and with a whip of small cords had imperiously driven out from the Temple the money changers who desecrated the holy place by

their presence and their traffic. These and kindred things made the atmosphere electric with religious interest. There was a very welter of debate. Speculation was rife. Superstition lifted its head unashamed. Religious faith and fervor blazed into flame. Nor was political agitation absent. While the Pharisees and Essenes were moved with a great religious concern, the Herodians and the Sadducees laid their political plots and Herod trembled in a guilty but superstitious fear that John whom he had beheaded had returned from the dead. It is not difficult to catch something of the spirit of the day or to sense the agitation of the people.

THE QUESTION OF JESUS.

It was into this atmosphere that Jesus thrust his question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is? Who do you say that I am?" Now the Son of man is used in this question in a most significant way. With this Son of man is to be identified the Messiah. He is not only Son of man, he is the representative man, the first born of the human family, the new federal head of the race. When men were moved by the Messianic hope they had strange stirrings of new world possibilities in one great outstanding and commanding personality under the law of primogeniture, who should take the supreme place of authority, responsibility and influence as the head of the entire human family. It was in the midst of this interest

that Jesus asked his question: "What are men saying about it? Who is in their mind as the one who fits the divine promise and the age-long human expectation?" His question is a twofold one but vitally connected. There is in it an essential unity whether the first had direct reference to himself or not. Whether it was purely an academic or a personal question. There is a distinction between the Authorized and the Revised translations. The former puts the question: "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" The latter makes it to read: "Who do men say that the Son of man is? Who do you say that I am?" In the Authorized Version the question appears to be one. In the Revised Version it is not necessarily so. He may be asking upon what figure in human history, upon what person on the horizon of the present day, the minds of men fix as the one who fits the Messianic descriptions and expectations of prophetic utterance. It will not matter just how the question is taken because Jesus immediately thrusts himself into the foreground. In its final issue the question involves these two aspects. *If I am not the Messiah, who is? If I am not the Messiah, who am I?* The answer to these two questions must be determined. The moral conscience of the race cannot escape either of them. Jesus is thrust into the midst of a speculative question of human interest, into the midst of all religious interests, into the midst of all political hopes, into the midst of all

superstitious fears. *He is a figure who cannot be escaped. His is a personality that must be taken into account.* If men are not willing to receive him as the one long promised by divine appointment, as the Saviour of the race and the Lord of humanity, to whom will they turn? If they are not willing so to receive him what will they do with him? This question was like a salt precipitant in a chemical solution. There was an immediate precipitation of interest and an immediate illumination of understanding so that the answer to the question appears with crystal clearness.

WHO IS THE SON OF MAN?

Let us then take the first half of the question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" The answer to that is very pat and patent. There is a variety of opinion. Men have always differed about him as they do to-day. There were some who said with superstitious dread that he was John the Baptist—thus Herod whose guilty conscience bade him tremble in the presence of the supernatural power of this pre-eminent personality. It might be the resurrected man who in the labyrinth of the grave had slain the monster death and had come forth leading captivity captive and proclaiming gifts to men. There is a type of human mind that would acclaim John as the Son of man. His ruggedness, his austerity, his asceticism, his Nazarite vow and consecration, his stern and uncompromising courage, his

heaven-born message, coupled with the popular acclaim, made him a figure to be reckoned with in the estimate of all messianic judgments. Yet John denied what these would have acclaimed.

Others declared him to be Elijah—not resurrection here but reincarnation. There were some doubtless who dreamed that through successive incarnations Elijah had won the wisdom of the centuries, and attained the perfection of power that comes from oft-repeated experiences. They dreamed that in a new incarnation he was now speaking through the lips and acting through the members of the Man of Nazareth. Their minds harked back across the centuries to that fatal day when striding into the presence of Ahab, the apostate King, Elijah had seized from his trembling grasp the reins of vice-gerent government and proclaimed that from that day Israel's fate depended upon the word of this political agitator and reformer, leader of all the agitation of revolution, demanding with imperious impatience the immediate cessation of license, repentance for apostasy, and reform of customs. Such an one as Gandhi in India is to-day whose inviting personality, whose dauntless daring, whose often intemperate though wise speech, has seized upon the popular imagination which almost lifts him into the place of a demi-god. No wonder that there were many in the excitable and excited throngs of Jerusalem and Judea who looked upon Jesus as Elijah.

Others saw in him the compassion of a Jeremiah, the man of sorrows. Had they not seen his hands stretched over Jerusalem while his eyes flowed with tears and his voice shook with grief as he pleaded with his own: "Oh, Jerusalem! Jerusalem! . . . How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Others saw in him one of the prophets, an ethical idealist, revolutionist and reformer, calling men again to a personal consciousness of God; and demanding their recognition of his immediate presence and lordship in their lives. A Wesley type here, as Savonarola was a type of Elijah.

Then having obtained the conflicts of opinion that flowed back and forth in the public discussions wherever men assembled, Jesus suddenly turned upon his disciples with the other half of his question. "Now you disciples have seen the agitation, heard the discussion, weighed the suggestions and opinions. What do you think of these opinions and suggestions? Do any of them or all of them fit the measure of the man whom prophecy requires, whom humanity seeks? Do the scales of divine and human necessities balance with any of these? Who do you say that I am?"

There is a certain kind of scales which not only weighs him who steps upon them but measures him at the same time. So might one be weighed in the balance of human expectation and measured with a standard of divine requirement. Thus

when the disciples realized that all others failed Jesus stepped upon the scales and under the standard and submitted himself to the rigid test of divine and human Messianic requirements.

You will recall that in *Les Miserables* there is a scene in which a peasant is caught under an overturned cart and is likely to perish there. Crowds of helpless people look on in impotent grief at his suffering. One and another strain themselves singly and in groups in a vain effort to release the suffering victim. Suddenly there steps out of the crowd a man who lays aside his coat, puts his shoulders under the load and with a mighty heave of his muscles lifts the load and releases the victim. Immediately the Prefect of Police who is in the crowd identifies by this feat the escaped prisoner Jean Val Jean. No other shoulders, no other giant strength, no other mighty muscles could have been found in France equal to that Herculean task. The performance of that feat, in itself, provided an all sufficient identification. There could be for Jean Val Jean no alibi. Certain formalities of inquiry, evidence and proof, must be undertaken. But the deed done, he said with an authority and trustworthiness that could not be denied—"this is Jean Val Jean."

So when Jesus of Nazareth put his shoulders under the burdens of the world and laid his heart alongside their sorrows, those who looked upon him were constrained to believe him to be the Son

of man. Surely here is one who is more than John, Elijah, Jeremiah, or Prophet! They have observed the accumulated evidence concerning him. They had seen and heard and handled him in all the most intimate relationships of life. They had had opportunity to measure him in terms both of humanity and of deity. The weight of evidence is incontrovertible. There is only one verdict possible. So the judgment must forevermore proclaim him as the only figure who could fit the measurements of that One on the horizon of time and eternity. Nicodemus seeing him work declares: "No man did what he did except God was with him." The officers sent to arrest him and returning without him declared that no man had ever spoken as he spoke. The woman at the Well of Sychar returns to tell the men of her village that here was one who had told her all that she had ever done. To her he was the Revealer. To some he appeared as Healer; to others Comforter; to many as Life-Giver. All these evidences had accumulated in their minds till now the question of Jesus demands the answer of their judgment. They answer weighing judgment by evidence, and in addition to the compulsion of the evidence they have, there is added a flash of divine illumination. They suddenly saw and understood the significance of this One with them. They did not get their knowledge of him from the discussion about him. Human opinions settle nothing about Jesus. He is, he can be, only God-revealed.

He is too great, too sublime, too divine for any other possible understanding. Canst thou by searching find our God? Thus when Paul came to preach his gospel it was a message concerning Jesus not given by man nor obtained from man. God had taught him. There is a later word which declares that no man could call Jesus Lord save in the Holy Spirit. It is equally true that in the Holy Spirit no man can call him anything else or anything less than God.

And so here Peter, the first confessor, has this flash of divine revelation illuminating his understanding and instantly in obedience to that revelation he declares his faith in the Son of God. To know him thus is to find in him eternal life for he is life and life-giver. By faith we, too, answer him as he challenges our souls. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

PETER'S CONFESSION.

Peter's confession involved a realization of one personality embodying two natures; the Son of man—the Son of God. Perfect in both natures and perfectly revealing in himself, both humanity and God. Therefore he becomes the one mediator between God and man, the Daysman who brings the two into a blessed and eternal union.

Note also that Peter's confession was the expression of an unshakable conviction about which there was no uncertainty. In it is no shadow of doubt. The source of information, the divine

illumination by which Peter knew him, produces conviction unshakable. What became to Peter, the first confessor, unquestioned certainty, has remained the unshakable conviction of the Christian church from that momentous hour until this present one. Through all the debates of the past, under all the turmoil of theological controversy, the heart of the church has never been moved from the confession of him who first saw and said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Was Peter the rock on which Jesus would build his church? Surely yes! Forget the prejudice attendant upon the Catholic-Protestant controversy. Let Jesus say what he said: "Thou art the rock. On this rock I will build my church." Here is a man who receives by faith and confesses in faith, Jesus as Lord. In his confession he becomes the spokesman for a group of men gathered about him—those first twelve. Their silence is eloquent consent on their part in his confession. They become the nucleus of all disciples who should be brought together with a like faith and to a like confession. On that first group of disciples as a nucleus Jesus will build his church. It will grow; expand; member after member will be added to his body until the day of its completion and his return to men with Peter's faith. And men who with Peter's faith make Peter's confession will be the raw material out of which the finished product of the divine building will be

wrought. *By* the Spirit of God men will receive the Lord Jesus. *In* the Spirit of God they will confess Jesus as Lord, and *through* the Spirit of God men will cohere in a blessed unity in the Lord. There is from the standpoint of Jesus no other foundation on which the church could be built.

It is upon the condition of that fact that Jesus enters into the heart and life of men. From the standpoint of the believer "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ the Lord." From the standpoint of Christ himself no other foundation can be laid than he himself laid in calling forth the confession of those first disciples. Not the confession and not the faith, but the men holding the faith and making the confession are the rock on which Jesus builds his church. Surely the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Hades may reach out its arms to embrace each successive generation of believers, the grave may prove victorious for innumerable hosts of disciples, death may through countless centuries defeat the expectations of many believers. But the living church growing by the additions of newly won believers shall from generation to generation continue inviolate and inviolable impregnable against all the assaults of the enemy.

"What saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess

with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is upon that foundation we invite you to build with us the church of Christ. We call you to build your life, your living self, controlled, inspired, by the faith of your heart into the risen and living Christ and by the confession of your lips submit yourself unto his lordship.

VII

The Word of His Critics.

THE character of criticism hinges upon the spirit and purpose of the critic. Critics and criticisms are of two kinds—destructive and constructive.

Destructive criticism is provoked by the personal equation in matters of controversial opinion. It is peculiarly susceptible to bitterness of spirit, intemperance of speech and intolerance of attitude. Out of it proceed warring factions, persecutions, divisions, parties and strife. Such criticism is provoked by conflict of opinion, irreconcilable differences of thought and judgment; by the overturning of tradition on the one hand and the effort to support and perpetuate tradition on the other; by the ignoring of prejudice become orthodox by the mere expedient of age. Every expression of individuality in the face of mass opinions, movements, customs, is provocative of adverse, censorious and destructive criticism. Any course of action which contravenes custom or public opinion, or any attack upon special privilege, is sure to arouse at once the violence and the opposition of critics whose words would damn, whose spirit would execute. Even more

prolific of adverse judgment, of censorious criticism and faultfinding, directed toward religious leaders, is any rebuke on their part toward sinful conduct of those enamoured of sin, who being married to it are unwilling to divorce themselves from it. Such a spirit always subjects the object of its attack to scandalous innuendo, sly insinuations, pernicious accusations, warrings, threatenings and malignant misinterpretation. Perhaps the best illustration of such a spirit is the swarming school of destructive critics who have laid violent hands upon the Bible; who, while professing to treat it like any other literature, defame it, misinterpret it, misrepresent it and seek to bury it under a damning mass of vain praise and false research. Of course their attack on the Bible is but an ever recurring and age-long attack upon the Person and the atonement of the Lord Jesus. Hence their violence of method and spirit. Him they hate without a cause and so him they would destroy without reason. Such critics may be good people but such criticism is born of the devil. These always enlarge rumours, misinterpret people, and pervert facts. With them the evil wish to destroy is the father of the evil thought of wrong. Suspicion is evidence, accusation is proof, and opposition is judgment.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.

Constructive criticism on the other hand is born of love, confidence and unselfish interest. It is

generally impersonal with a sincere regard for the interest of truth, integrity and efficiency. It may offer counsel, perhaps remedies, and undertake co-operation in correction of evils, but it does so always in the spirit of fraternity and with a tolerance of charity. It is open, frank and fraternal. It walks by no devious ways, employs no questionable methods, and asserts itself with none of the intolerance of the inquisition. It takes account of facts, motives and results. It may even become an earnest advocate of methods or men, but always without bitterness, in the consciousness that constructive methods must outrun destructive efforts. It has much faith in the virtue of patience and the final effectiveness in the persevering purpose to discover the truth and to make use of it in the interest of God's kingdom in the earth.

THIS CRITICISM OF JESUS WAS JUSTIFIED.

The words and the spirit of the critics of the Lord Jesus mightily illustrate the great facts which have an almost universal application in the realm of criticism of public men; and at the same time demonstrate the essential difference between the Lord Jesus and all others who have ever become the targets of misunderstanding, of hatred and of the machinery of persecution which misunderstanding and hatred employ to destroy the objects of their opposition.

This criticism of Jesus was justified, yet it was

destructive and ruinous. It had indeed the hand of Esau but its face was the face of Jacob. Sly, sensuous, subtle, subversive! It wore a label of piety upon a bottle of deadly poison. Yet let us observe that the things which his critics said about him were fact. He did actually receive sinners! More, he ate with them! Yet still worse, he became the chum of sinners, their intimate friend and companion! Now in all ages and among all peoples the companionship of an upright young man with sinful associates is a most dangerous practice. Sin like leprosy is a contagious disease. Sinners, like walking carriers of contagion, bear about with them the sin germ and infect all with whom they come in contact. It is still true, as it ever has been true, that evil communications corrupt good manners. Solomon was thoroughly aware of this fundamental moral fact when he wrote with great urgency the exhortation of Proverbs 1:10, f.: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us . . . we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; thou shalt cast thy lot among us; we will all have one purse: my son, walk not thou in the way with them. Refrain thy foot from their path: for their feet run to evil." What chance has an individual youth against his crowd. When Kipling wrote: "The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack" he probably did not have in mind that of which he might have taken account that if

the pack is strong to sin then indeed is the strength of the pack the irresistible force which wraps itself like binding cords and enslaving chains about the wolf. That is to say, if the feet of the crowd are running in the way of evil, the feet of the individual will not easily find the path of virtue.

Some of us recall the heart-breaking shock of disappointment and dismay with which we learned of the downfall of one of the greatest preachers in one of the greatest churches in one of the most progressive cities of our land only a few years ago. He was brilliant, beloved and mightily effective, both as a preacher and a workman. Suddenly he succumbed to the power of drink. The house which he had been building for nearly half a century collapsed in ruin and he went down in it into a grave of shame. Mantled in a charitable robe of sorrow we asked why and how such a calamity could have overtaken him. The answer was not far nor hard to find. His popularity had betrayed him. Banquets and feasts and after-dinner speeches, and running with a godless crowd: sin had overtaken him and he had not been able to stand up against the momentum and inertia of the mass movement of his companions. Though he had been sought for leadership, they found that the leader became the led, and the pilot lost his course under the clamorous influences of worldliness and the insistent voices of subtle flattery and plausible sophistries.

The criticism directed toward the Lord Jesus was not of an occasional, accidental event, but of the habit of Jesus. It was his custom to receive sinners and to eat with them. The experience is so familiar and so universal that we may know exactly how it began and progressed to its hateful and hideous climax. It certainly started as a whisper, a lament, just a question from friend to friend, the raising of the eyebrow, the interrogation of anxiety. Then followed the voiced suspicion of lukewarm or false friends, to be succeeded by the settled distrust and hostility of those who had always been the enemies, though sometimes their hostility had been overwhelmed and subdued by the appeal of his presence, the popularity of his name, the publicity of his good works. But whispering suspicion grew bold in the face of persistent offense, so that directly accusation took the place of suspicion, suspicion hastened into distrust, distrust voiced itself into hostility and hostility became an open agitation for his destruction. From that point it was but a step to the cross. His critics were his murderers, unreasoning, implacable, incurable.

Some years ago I had occasion to realize the intense bitterness of criticism which was being directed toward me as pastor by a prominent woman in the church of which we were both members. It was persistent, pronounced and hurtful. Yet the woman was charming socially, active religiously and without question she believed herself

justified in the criticisms she voiced and the bitterness she cherished. One day I called her into my study and asked her to talk the matter over with me frankly, which she agreed to do. It did not take long to discover that she had no criticism of me as a Christian, nor any doubt about God's favor upon my ministry, or his approval of my message. Her whole criticism had grown out of a personal resentment directed toward the pastor because he had exposed one sin of which, though not guilty, circumstances could easily make an appearance of guilt for her. In the course of our conversation it developed that she held further resentment because some friends of hers were not saved and were unwilling to hear my message because of a personal dislike. I then directed our conversation along the following lines. I asked the good woman why her friends, seeing that they were strangers, held that estimate of her pastor. After a moment's thought she said with great frankness: "I suppose it is because of my criticisms." Then I asked her successively these questions:

"Do you believe that your pastor is a Christian; that he has been called by God to preach; that he has been directed by God into the pastorate of this church; and that in the main he is discharging faithfully and effectively the ministry committed to him by the Holy Spirit?" To all of these questions she answered unhesitatingly: "I have no doubt of it." Then she suddenly saw the

resultant condemnation of her own course of action, and immediately repudiated it and promised that there should be no offense in the future. But did she keep her promise? Did she amend her ways? Not for a month! The old sore festered again and broke out. The old bitterness returned, the old sin was persisted in to the loss of her own happiness, the defeat of her dearest hopes and the failure of the gospel message to reach the friends she loved. Ah! the unreasoning implacability and incurableness of that spirit and habit of criticism.

From the standpoint of his critics the Lord Jesus was justly subject to criticism on the following, and perhaps many other grounds:

The violence with which he drove the money changers from the Temple. John 2:13, ff.

For the uncompromising character of his demands upon a friendly ruler who might have advanced his cause. John 3:1, ff.

Because of his attitude to a fallen woman. John 4:4, ff.

Because he identified himself with prophecy. Luke 4:16-30.

Because he forgave sins. Matt. 9:28.

Because he disregarded criticism. Matt. 9:10-17.

Because he set the necessities of men above the traditions of the Sabbath. Matt. 12:9-14, John 5: etc.

Because of the demands of the Sermon on the Mount. Matt. 5-7.

Because he accepted the wasteful worship of the woman who broke her alabaster box of ointment upon his feet. Luke 7:36-50.

Because of the zeal which consumed him and led his kinsmen to believe him beside himself. Matt. 12:46-50.

Because he permitted the demons to enter into the swine and destroy property. Matt. 8:28-34.

Because he had wisdom beyond his schooling. Matt. 13:54.

Because he offered himself as the Bread of Life. John 6:22-71.

Because he set more store by the inner sanctity of the life than the outward cleansing of hands. Matt. 15:1-20.

Because he refused Pharisees and Sadducees alike a sign substantiating his authority. Matt. 16:1, ff.

Because he offered many signs, thus inducing the people to believe in him. John 11:47-54.

Because he received little children and blessed them. Matt. 19:13-15.

Because he visited the rich tax gatherer. Luke 19:1-10.

Because he made conditions too hard for the rich young ruler. Matt. 19:16, ff.

It appears from this incomplete list of recorded occasions of seemingly justifiable and justified

criticisms that the Lord Jesus did not touch life at any point of vital contact without inviting the hostility of censorious and faultfinding critics. The facts, superficially at least, justified the critics of his teachings, utterances, associations. *His critics were right as to fact, but nevertheless utterly wrong in their criticism.*

HIS CRITICS AND THEIR CRITICISMS WERE WRONG.

The circumstantial, logical, plausible, self-evident may all be wrong. Condemnation upon circumstantial evidence, even when the logic of it is irresistible, is rarely, if ever, justified. The verdict is based upon circumstances. Logic or plausibility is never final, rarely conclusive. All the evidence is necessary to a true judgment. In addition to all the evidence, a fair unbiased, unprejudiced mind, capable of impersonal judgment is necessary to a true judgment.

I was greatly interested and pleased some years ago while preaching in a Kentucky village church to an audience in which one keen country boy was present. I used one of Æsop's fables to illustrate the necessity for having in hand all the facts before final judgment was pronounced. The fable was of the farmer who left his baby boy in a cradle in the field, but under the care of a faithful watch dog. Upon the farmer's return he discovered the cradle overturned and the dog lying near with bloody mouth, the baby not in sight. He immediately assumed from the evidence that the

dog had slain and eaten the child, whereupon he proceeded to kill the dog. Only then did he discover in the brush near by the carcass of a wolf slain by the faithful dog, and upon re-turning the cradle the child underneath it asleep. When I finished telling the story the country lad who knew dogs and was not to be swayed in his judgment of them by any circumstantial evidence, cried out in the intensity of his emotion: "I knew that dog did not kill the baby."

Strange that we cannot always give judgment not in relation to incidental or accidental events, but in relation to the testimony and characteristics of life. Yet it was just here that the critics of Jesus most erred. They failed to take his life into account, nor realized that all habitual conduct is predicated upon character and is in consonance with character.

Certainly from the verdict of his critics certain evidence was missing. In criticising him for association with sinners they did not take into account the fact that Jesus was of sin immune. Jesus was a carrier of holiness. Men were inoculated with righteousness by contact with him. He was sin's antidote—death of death and hell's destruction. That fact alone differentiates him from all others. There have been other great teachers of ethical ideals. Others have exerted a tremendous influence for righteousness upon their fellows. Others have displayed in themselves great powers of moral restraint. Others have been required, have

even chosen to live in adverse and contaminating circumstances, in the midst of evil associations, yet have kept themselves pure. There are men who seem to put no limit upon self mastery, where the lure of the world is strongest and the power of evil suggestion and evil association most undermining. One looks in constant admiration and wonder upon the fact that missionaries in the midst of paganism and heathenism, not only keep themselves unspotted from the world, but somehow the integrity and the faith and the conduct of their children are kept as well. Multitudes of men have resisted unto blood.

Jesus did all this, plus. Not only was He holy in himself, not only did he maintain the perfect righteousness of his conduct as well as the holiness of his nature; but he communicated of himself, and from himself, holiness to men who came in contact with him.

There is no housewife who has not been distressed by the fact that in undertaking to peel onions she has discovered that they have left an unpleasant odor upon her hands, an odor which sometimes persists for many days. All that might be avoided by the simple expedient of peeling the onion under water. The water forms a sheath, a fine film of protection through which the odor of the onion cannot and does not pass, thus leaving the hands uncontaminated by the contact with the source of the distressing odor. Now if we could imagine water able to convey to the onion the

fragrance of the rose, we might have an adequate illustration of what happened when Jesus came in contact with sinners. There was about him a sheath of holiness which protected him from the contaminations of sinful men, and there was within him an outgoing energy of divine personality which communicated to sinful men the fragrance of the heavenly character resident in himself. Jesus was a life whose flowing stream of deity kept his humanity clean and communicated his holiness to others. *His was a communicable personality!* This fact alone stamped upon him the mark of deity. He was but the pressed-forth essence of God, the fulness of the Godhead bodily manifested.

JESUS THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

The fact underlying the criticism, the fact that Jesus did receive sinners and ate with them and became their friend, is the glory of Jesus and the perennial hope and salvation of sinners. Receiving sinners, Jesus has drawn into his retinue that innumerable host who wear the white garments which were washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Receiving sinners he has transformed them into saints. He is the sinner's David in the Cave of Adullam. To him the oppressed, the bitter of spirit, and those burdened with doubt go out. By coming to him they lose what they bring and are transformed into princes and priests of God. The breath of Jesus upon anyone

is like the wind winnowing the chaff from the wheat. How marvellously contact with him exposes and eliminates the base, the unworthy, the sinful, and produces in their place the noble, the true and the holy. Hearing his voice:

> "Blessings abound where'er He reigns
> The prisoner leaps to loose his chains;
> The weary find eternal rest,
> And all the sons of want are blest."

Because Jesus receives sinners, men hope. For in receiving them he forgives and cleanses and transforms and re-enforces and perfects. He receives all kinds of sinners. They come like Nicodemus, men who are so correct as to be cautious, so conspicuous as to be timid, and he gives them faith which converts them into defenders of himself and his cause, making them like Nicodemus unafraid of an unjust judge who nailed their Lord to a cross and making them demand of him the privilege of burying his broken body. He receives men of the milk and water character of Simon and transforms them into Peter the Rock upon whom he will build his church. James and John, the sons of thunder, come to him and are made over by him, the one winning the crown of martyrdom, the other becoming the apostle of love. Matthew and Zacchæus, tax gathering exploiters of the present and financial casuists of the future, being received by him are converted into stewards of the Kingdom of Heaven and the manifold mercies of God. A woman who was a

sinner heard his word and was forgiven, and being forgiven was clothed with the ambassadorial garments of a special courier of the Lord of lords and King of kings to invite her neighbours and friends to come forth to One who had told her all things that ever she did, and thereby set her feet upon a new path forevermore. The lame, the blind, the deaf, the halt, the poor, the dead, brought in contact with him are healed, reenforced, made alive, and return from him to their places in homes and society, empowered and commissioned to heaven's high and holy service.

JESUS HAS NOT CHANGED IN CHARACTER.

Ah! I am glad he did not stop it because some folk did not like it. I am glad that the fires of criticism directed toward him could not blight the love that permitted his invitation, nor stop the working of the promise which declared: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Jesus still receives sinners! His invitations still hold good. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me and I will make you fishers of men." "Come and see." Whosoever will, from whatever haunt of sin, from whatever deep degradation of failure, from whatever dungeon of doubt; whosoever will may come to him in the assurance that a loving heart will welcome, and ministering hands attend. He is waiting to-

day for you to come,—waiting, I think, in some impatience of love and mercy; waiting with a mighty outgoing of compassion; waiting with no word of condemnation or of reproof. Only waiting for you to come that he may open to you the reservoir of heaven's holiest gifts and make you heir of all the riches of his grace and the inheritance of the saints.

Dr. Biederwolf has a charming story of the husband whose wife had lost her reason when, for the sake of the little life she was permitted to bear, she went down to the valley and shadow of death. Afterwards for many weary months the love and tenderness of her husband watched over her. Occasional outbreaks of violence made her presence objectionable to her neighbours and so they moved from one residence to another. Till finally he bought a home, surrounded it with much land and announced that he would not again move and that only over his own dead body could even the officers of the law remove her. Then upon the advice of physicians he went with her for a stay of months to the scenes of their youth. With her he gathered flowers from the gardens of their childhood, walked in the meadows, climbed the hills, barefoot, like children, waded in the streams and lay among the clover kneedeep in June. With what yearning he watched for signs of returning sanity, of restored balance; but he watched in vain. Toward the close of the summer weary, worn, disappointed, all but despairing, he

brought her home. Upon reaching home, completely exhausted she was put at once to bed. He sat beside her. She seized upon his hand and held it and almost instantly dropped into a profound slumber. Almost all night he sat by her unmoving, to be rewarded at break of day by seeing her dear eyes open with the light of restored reason shining from them. Her first question was: "Where am I?" To which he answered: "At home, dearest." "Where have I been?" "On a long, long journey, but thank God you are at home again." And then wondering, with tremulous emotion her lips framed the next question. "Where were you all the time I have been away?" To which he said in answer: "Where I am now, darling, always by your side, waiting for you to come home."

Oh, the unfailing love of Christ when in the insanity of sin we have wandered far from home. His compassion has never failed. The Great Companion has walked by our side championing our cause against all. Leading us gently by the hand that he might bring us home again into the banqueting house of his love, to spread over us his banners, and make us worthy for abiding, eternal residence in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. I am thinking that he wonders why you wait so long to come; why you need to be aroused and persuaded. For Jesus still receives sinners and he still waits for you to come.

VIII

The Word of His Judge.

JESUS is on trial. He is under accusation of those who would destroy from the world both Jesus and what he represents in the world. Both his trial and his accusation were incidents in history. They are, however, equally a continuous experience in human history. Jesus is always on trial among men for there are always men who would destroy him and banish from the earth his gospel, his church, his presence. He has ever had strange capacity for making enemies. This ability of his is no less conspicuous than his capacity for making friends, disciples, followers. For nearly two thousand years the religious turmoil of the earth has centred around this effort. The cry of the crowd of unspiritual men, of wicked men, of ignorant men, stirred by their baser passions, enslaved to their carnal desires, under the tutelage of the god of this world, has ever been, and is now, "Away with him!" There are those who would destroy him by substituting for his historical Person a modern caricature. Some would destroy him by perverting his teachings; others by diverting that stream of influence, that message of love, that ministry of mercy, which

flowing out from him in the beginning winds its way through the deep valleys of human experience, across the plains of time to the shore line of eternity. The aspects of the trial have never varied seriously. The same opposition, the same defence, the same reasons and arguments, the same issues and actions, the same judgments and destinies are everywhere apparent when Jesus is on trial.

THE JUDGE.

Jesus is on trial before a judge who in addition to his judicial ermine sits in an atmosphere of moral and political toleration amounting to indifferentism. But he sits in judgment while strangely biased by personal interest as affected by Jesus and his enemies. Pilate was committed by his judicial position to the exercise of even-handed justice; to the finding of a verdict uninfluenced by passion, prejudice or personal interest. But he represented a world power and a world philosophy whose basic religious principle was the indifference of complete religious toleration in which religion was always held sacred and free from the attack of bigots and bigotry. Yet Pilate was so strangely influenced by his own personal equation as involved in the trial, as to be unfitted for his task and incapable of an impartial decision, unless conscience supported by incontrovertible facts should assert itself enough to require the pronouncement of a

true verdict. Perhaps these were the most difficult of all circumstances in which to give an impartial verdict in the midst of a clamour for conviction made by very powerful enemies and interests. As a casuist he might reason that no effort of his could possibly save the prisoner from the mob who had determined beforehand his destruction. Self-interest might plead with him to avoid making an issue in rendering judgment which might easily destroy himself. Diplomacy would doubtless whisper into his ear the suggestion that after all whatever verdict he might render would be only an opinion set counter to the opinion of the religious leaders who ought to be supposed to be more capable of judging and in better position to judge than he. A distinguished American Jewish rabbi said publicly a while ago that the only thing which separated the Christian and the Jew was a theological dogma that had in it after all no serious moral value. Multitudes to-day follow these lines of argument in the effort to convince themselves and others that opinions about Jesus do not vitally affect truth, justice or destiny; that after all, theological views are but man-made opinions and should be accepted or discredited without serious implications or results.

In the face of this attitude of mind, Pilate's verdict is not surprising, though taken in connection with his action it is the most remarkable verdict in the history of the world. He pronounced an absolute acquittal of fault as regards the accu-

sations made against Jesus, but he passed upon him a sentence of death—judicial acquittal followed by judicial condemnation. Here was a verdict wherein the extremes of moral responsibility and moral failure meet in partnership. It is a verdict which has an exact counterpart and reproduction in many modern methods. Multitudes there are who confess Jesus to be a good man, even a man without sin, who live in total disregard of the implications of that judgment and in total rejection of his claims to lordship in the life; for if the verdict of acquittal from the charge at fault stands, Jesus the sinless One immediately assumes the place of sovereignty in human life, and any condemnation of him following such acquittal becomes criminal murder of the Son of God.

THE ACCUSATIONS.

Let us then consider the accusations. In order to judge the judge and his judgment we must weigh with care the accusations presented against Jesus who stood in Pilate's judgment hall, the same Jesus Christ who stands at the door of your judgment and waits the verdict of your faith or of your unbelief. The accusations made by his enemies in the historic incident of his trial were twofold. First they were accusations of sedition —he made himself a king. Sedition is utterance disloyal to the government tending to produce, though not yet having eventuated in, insurrection

or revolution. If Jesus were guilty then his arrest on the charge was a timely move to prevent trouble, a prudent move to perpetuate the established order. If they were true and Jesus were only a man guilty of these utterances, his arrest was a duty; these accusations were a political virtue. If he made the claim that he was a king and so guilty of sedition because of that utterance, then there must have been in his claim some peculiar quality as to fact, some peculiar support as to testimony.

JESUS DID CLAIM TO BE KING.

His claim did have a peculiar testimony and a peculiar quality as to fact. It was a claim which had been made for him from the beginning of his earthly career, a claim producing cumulative fury on the part of the Jews. The claim that Jesus was king was supported by the wise men from the East. They came asking: "Where is he who is born King of the Jews?" They were guided by properly interpreted prophecy and by the star of destiny to the stable in Bethlehem where the young child with his mother awaited their worship and their gifts.

Jesus had delivered the inaugural address which we call the Sermon on the Mount, laying down the principles of his heavenly kingdom and calling about him as a royal retinue the twelve men whom history knows as his apostles, ambassadors extraordinary, ministers plenipoten-

tiary to whom he gave the keys of the kingdom and the exercise of regal authority in its establishment in the earth. He himself exercised such royal authority as was demonstrated in the healing of the sick, the blind, the lame, the halt, the raising of the dead, the stilling of turbulent storms and seas, the multiplication of food for the appeasing of hunger of multitudes, the casting out of demons so that a Roman centurion understanding royal authority supported by royal power, in preferring a request that Jesus should exercise his royal prerogatives of universal sovereignty in a deed of mercy declares: "You do not need to come down to my house, for I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to this one, Come, and he cometh." The inference is clear that he recognized the royal prerogatives of Jesus to whom discarnate spirits and natural forces were alike in subjection.

His royalty had also been supported by the testimony of the jubilant multitude who on Palm Sunday had spread their garments in the way and with the waving of palms had joyfully acclaimed him as the blessed of the Lord while they sang before him their hosannas.

His claim to royalty had been misinterpreted and misjudged by his enemies. As a king of this world and as concerning himself with the political institutions of his day their hostility to his claim of royalty, had their interpretation of his claim

been true, would have been supported by some justice. But their misinterpretation of the kingdom which Jesus came to establish and the authority which he exercises is still persisted in by all the adherents of the so-called social gospel, and is a misinterpretation of intent as well as a perversion of fact. His claims to royalty as interpreted by Jesus, and judged by Pilate, was that he was a king, and is a king, not of this world. Neither he nor his kingdom are of earth, they are from heaven. His seat of government is in heaven, even as is our citizenship. Phil. 3:20. The purposes, principles and powers of the King in the Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus came to establish are from heaven. He is a King by divine appointment. Long ago David, who in the flesh was his father, but in the Spirit his subject, had written under an inspiration of the Spirit of him: "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." And the king accepting the sovereignty from that seat of government announces: "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son: This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." His was a kingdom not to be maintained by physical force or legislative enactment. What had the military systems of the world to fear from a king who called into being no military organizations; set in motion no physical machine with which to combat the powers

and organizations by which military governments are supported? What has Cæsar to fear from Christ? His was a kingdom not of diplomacy but of truth; the kingdom which comes not by observation but by illumination; a kingdom not superimposed from without but rising from within. For the Kingdom of Heaven is within its subjects as well as in the midst of his subjects. No wonder Pilate judged him not guilty of sedition and that he was not disturbed by its implications as from Jesus. Jesus does not design political revolution. His is not even a programme of moral reformation. *He undertakes the spiritual transformation of the world.* He would leave the crown on Cæsar's head, bring the cross to Cæsar's embrace and put the Spirit of God within Cæsar's heart. Thus transforming Cæsar's life and bringing it into consonance with Christ's character he would dominate Cæsar's world, for the miracle of Cæsar's transformation would but interpret and presage the transformation of Cæsar's subjects and translate them into the kingdom of him whose kingdom is universal because his truth is eternal. By this means he would bring the kingdoms of this world with their glory and honour unto the kingdom of our God and his Christ. Imperfectly what Pilate saw, Constantine experienced. Before his mind whether waking or sleeping, in a vision was lifted up a cross surmounted by the slogan: *In hoc signo vinces.* Napoleon, who next to Alexander was the

greatest military genius and the greatest military despot the world has ever known, after his condemnation to the exile of St. Helena, said in substance: "Alexander and I founded world kingdoms upon force. Jesus of Nazareth used no force, employed no armies, but he has built a kingdom of love. The empires which Alexander and I founded have crumbled into dust. The kingdom which Jesus established has to-day millions of willing subjects ready to live for its glory, to die in its defence." Truly, therefore, we sing to-day:

"The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine for ever.

"Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow
With food celestial feedeth.

"In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

"And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever."

BLASPHEMY.

The second accusation with which his enemies charged him was blasphemy. If his claim to be king was sedition, and therefore a blow at Rome's

political sovereignty, his claim to be Son of God was blasphemy and was a blow at Rome's boasted religious tolerance. He did claim to be the Son of God. That is, he claimed to be God appearing in person with design to exercise a divine authority in the earth. The Shepherd has come to his flock; the Husbandman to his field; the Husband to his home; the Father to his children; the Householder to his servants. His name Emmanuel signifies God in the midst, God with us. He claimed to be that after asserting "I and my Father are one," thus claiming authority, demanding worship, giving life. He thus presented himself as the one Mediator between God and men, the Way, the Truth, the Life. If that claim is established in the earth, then every other religion than the religion of his worship must be abandoned and made to disappear from the earth. Supreme authority cannot avoid being intolerant any more than can exclusive truth. Unto him every knee must bow, and to him every tongue must confess to the glory of God the Father. With full recognition of what this claim implied, while confronted with the fact of what Jesus is, Pilate declared him to be guiltless of crime, innocent of fault. It was no small thing for Jesus to say to him: "Thou would'st not have any power over me if it were not given thee from above." That is to say, "I am not here in response to the coercion of force. I am here by sovereign choice, subjecting myself to the vicissitudes of this hour and the

tragedies of this culmination of hate because these are the appointments of divine wisdom for the accomplishment of the divine purpose in the saving of the world. I do not know how Jesus got it to Pilate but somehow, perhaps vaguely, indefinitely, yet, *Pilate must have realized that he stood in the presence of the supreme Personality.* At any rate he twice pronounced him guiltless of blasphemy though he was charged with it by his vociferous enemies. Thus Pilate discharges Jesus from any guilt in his claim to universal sovereignty and to a divine nature. Thus he made and discharged the requirements forced upon him by his highest hour of moral responsibility. As to his verdict about Jesus, none could have more faithfully, loyally, nobly discerned or declared the truth.

PILATE'S ACTION.

But that verdict concerning Jesus, "I find no fault in him" whether delivered by Pilate or by you, carries with it certain moral obligations from which there is no escape apart from their discharge. If Jesus is the supreme Ruler of the world, if he is God with us, it needs no argument to establish the fact that unquestionably to him every knee should bow and that to him every tongue should confess. Pilate's action, based upon his verdict and in defiance of his judgment, made him guilty of the death of Christ, guilty of sedition against the King of heaven and guilty

of blasphemy against the living God. So when you share Pilate's verdict and follow Pilate's action, you are equally guilty with Pilate of these crimes. How futile the vain efforts of Pilate seeking justification for his supreme moral failure. He sought to evade and to disclaim moral responsibility so he washed his hands. Poor vain show! What an empty moral gesture it was, this spectacular, physical disclaimer which yet could never accomplish the abdication of moral responsibility. Yes, he disclaimed his responsibility. It was not up to him. He would simply pass it on to others: "I find no fault with him. You see to it! I will not be responsible. I pass on to you my responsibility."

Thus multitudes to-day! Thus perhaps you! You charge your parents, your teachers, your ministers, your environment, your temperament, your circumstances, your natural appetites, with a responsibility which you disclaim. But your disclaimer does not release you. Jesus still stands in Pilate's Hall, waiting! waiting! waiting!

What else has the judge to say? Poor Pilate! He realized how futile his disclaimer was so he tried once again to wriggle out of his moral corner. He made collusion with the Jews, that is, with the religious leaders. There is something undefinably fickle in his thrice repeated statement to the Jews: "I find no fault with him." It is as if he pleaded with them: "Cannot we agree to let him go? Do not you see I would not be justified?

You will not force me to an issue?" And at last he falls back upon their determination through their religious teachers. How can he uphold responsibility when they press adverse judgment?

But Pilate had access to the Book of prophecy, and to the voice of conscience and to the presence of Jesus. And these are they between which and the soul no teacher can intervene however much he dares to undertake such intervention. The competency of the soul is first effected in the moral responsibility of the individual. No, Pilate could not escape. And my friend, you cannot escape. For he is here, as he was there, long after the voices of all false teachers have subsided, have been permanently hushed. He is here as he was there, waiting, waiting, waiting, for you to decide. It is useless to ask the teachers, the rulers, "What will you do with Jesus?" That is not the question. The question is, What will you do, what shall I do with him?

Finally, when he could not appease his conscience, nor get rid of Jesus by a disclaimer, and when he realized that his collusion with the leaders could not accomplish the settlement of the question, he sought support from the crowd: "It is your annual privilege to have a prisoner released. Shall I release you Jesus?" But the crowd failed him. *It has always been easy to set the crowd against Jesus.* The popular voice makes its claims, disregards his presence, rejects his salvation and defies his power. The mob is

impersonal and so it is easy for the mob to reply: "His blood be on our heads. Away with him! Crucify him! No more can you get your verdict about Jesus and determine your action concerning him from the crowd. Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that walk therein. *Vox populi, vox dei, non est.* You cannot quiet your conscience with the clamour of the crowd. You cannot escape your judgment by the false movements of the mob. You too will have to face it out alone, as finally Pilate had to face it out and to decide in his own soul what he would do with Jesus. There was no escape for him. There is none for you. Jesus is now, as he was then, the inescapable issue.

"Jesus is standing in Pilate's Hall,
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all:
Hearken! what meaneth the sudden call?
What will you do with Jesus?

"Jesus is standing on trial still,
You can be false to Him if you will,
You can be faithful thro' good or ill:
What will you do with Jesus?

"Will you evade Him as Pilate tried?
Or will you choose Him, whate'er betide?
Vainly you struggle from Him to hide:
What will you do with Jesus?

"What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Some day your heart will be asking,
What will He do with me?"

I read a little while ago of a gentleman attending church service in Cleveland. The minister

was presenting the claims of Christ. As the visitor listened he found himself saying: "I wonder if the preacher will have anything new to offer?" Suddenly, however, it occurred to him that that was the very question he had been asking of all the ministers he had heard and that while asking it he had come to be fifty years of age without deciding for Christ. *Then he came to sudden realization that nothing new could be said, there being nothing new to say, and that if he was to become a Christian he must accept Christ on the testimony already given, the facts presented.* He immediately made his choice, announced his decision and committed himself to an open confession of Christ. That decision brought him to a moral sanity.

There is nothing else to be said. There are no other arguments to be adduced. God, through his word and by the Holy Spirit, unites with your conscience and your judgment and the invitation of the church in urging you to settle this matter now by a definite choice and by a committal of yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

IX

The Word of the First Doubter.

IN the ministry of Jesus doubt cut the nerve of divine power and paralyzed the miracle-working energy which proceeded forth from him. While doubt lasts, grace cannot operate. Nevertheless there is an honest doubt. At least there are honest doubters. These are they who, refusing to give heed to antecedent prejudice or seemingly impossible circumstances, weigh evidence, accept the testimony of facts and by faith link their experience on to the facts.

There is a form of doubt that has its origin in sin and is used as a cloak to cover sin. It is always superficial, generally trivial, and frequently blatant. But it reeks of hypocrisy just the same. It is not difficult to discern. It is not difficult for one who has spiritual discernment to see through it.

There is a form of doubt that seems to grow out of intellectual and moral inhibitions concerning spiritual religion. These are the stony ground hearers of Matthew 13, or the hard soil of the wayside, from which the seeds of the kingdom of truth are caught away. These doubters spend so much time asking questions they never get any

question answered. They are so much engaged in erecting intellectual hurdles that they never really enter any spiritual race course, nor run in the finals of revelation.

There are honest doubters who exercise their faculties to discern the truth and who, when convinced, yield obedience to the truth. These are unwilling to clothe agnosticism with a respectability of any intellectual or scientific fadism, and are sooner or later as certain to displace any icon of doubt with faith born of the truth, as the simplest child is to receive with wondering but simple faith the great verities of truth.

Thomas was of that kind. His was a typical experience which when understood will prove a present and potent provocation to personal faith. It was no light thing that he was asked to believe upon the simple testimony of his friends. Indeed, the truth presented for his acceptance was incredible. So amazing in its first presentation that it reacted with such force upon his intellectual and moral faculties as to create a spiritual paralysis and to leave him incapable of answering other than he did answer. For it must be confessed that to the unaided human intelligence and to the unquickened human conscience, there are very grave difficulties in the way of a belief in the resurrection of Jesus and a belief in what the resurrection declares Jesus to be. For we are told in Romans 1:4 that by the resurrection from the dead he is declared by the Spirit of holiness to be the Son

of God. The implications of the resurrection of Jesus are also stupendous for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so we must believe that they also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. He is but the first fruits of those who are raised from the dead, for it is written of him: "Since I live, ye also shall live."

It were well, therefore, for us to face frankly the difficulties with which Thomas was confronted, finding perchance through his experience a way out of our own difficulties and a faith firmly fixed upon facts to which God has lent his attestation.

THE ANTECEDENT IMPROBABILITY.

Such a resurrection was contrary to experience. They had known nothing of such an experience, therefore such a conception was entirely foreign to their thought. The very conception of such a fact had to be created in their minds. Thomas had not seen the resurrection. He had not even seen Jesus since his resurrection and seeing is believing. It was all but impossible for him to accept such a stupendous fact upon the testimony of any other. But the resurrection was not only contrary to his experience, it was contrary to all human observation. The records of history were against it. The verdict of history concerning all men was those terrible words of the fifth chapter of Genesis, "He died." But it had not been written of any: "He rose again." Longings for the

resurrection had been voiced by Job, David and others. Prophecies of this very event, the resurrection of Jesus, had been left on record by divine inspiration. Jesus himself had foretold it. But these things had not taken hold upon the conscious thought of the disciples any more than the records of certain strange cases as, for instance, the Shunammite's son; the man whose body was resurrected when the body of Elisha was buried in his tomb; Moses, for whose body Satan contended with Gabriel; the son of the widow of Nain; the daughter of Jairus, and their friend Lazarus. Again let it be said, these never seem to have gotten to the disciples. There is no intimation in the New Testament narrative that they had been even gripped by the current instance referred to above. They were as if they had not happened. No antecedent expectation of the resurrection had been created by them.

Not alone was the resurrection contrary to experience and to observation, but it was contrary to all they knew of natural law. All creation testified to the strong improbability of such an event. This was no case of swoon or of suspended animation. They had heard his death-cry when he gave up the spirit. They had seen that precious body broken, pierced by nails and spikes. They had stood by when the soldier thrust his spear into his side, presumably into his heart. They knew of the judicial pronouncement of his death. They had been party to the embalming of

his body and had seen his tomb sealed. There was, therefore, a perfectly natural incredulity about his resurrection. Even Mary, who loved him with an indescribable power, to discern the truth about him, had, when she saw him risen, supposed him to be a gardener. Place yourself, therefore, in position with Thomas and do not be impatient with him. The thing was simply too great, too unprecedented, to be expected.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF EVIDENCE.

There is to-day a widespread appeal to psychology and to the laws of psychic phenomena to disprove the reality of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We are told by grave and reverend gentlemen, who seem to think that they are *the* people and that wisdom will die with them, that the state of mind of the credulous disciples invited ready acceptance, on insufficient evidence, of this fact upon which hinges the value and the fate of the whole gospel story. We are told that someone missed him from the tomb from which his body had dissolved into gases, or had been stolen by his disciples, in spite of the armed guard. Then a whisper had started. Men said under bated breath: "Perhaps he is alive"; then, "He is alive." Then others more credulous, more emotional, created under their own credulous fancies his form. Others with equal gravity tell us that the appearances of Jesus were pure hallucinations on the part of overwrought and emotional

persons. Some now advance the information that here was a phantasm created by God to give very similitude to a spiritual fact. In other words that God perpetrated a fraud of seeming fact upon the disciples in order to enable them to accept the truth of an idea. Then we are also gravely told that the resurrection was merely the resurrection of an idea. This last is the profound wisdom of Christian Science.

All these theories and speculations have a total disregard for the facts of the narrative. They disregard the sealed tomb, the apprehensive Jews bringing their request to Pilate, the appointing and presence of the Roman guard, the earthquake, the angels, the incredulity of the disciples, the ten appearances at widely separated places, under widely varied circumstances, the difficulty with which the disciples accepted each new appearance as fact. The narrative itself suggests that Thomas and other disciples had suspicion of the operation of psychology in the case of some of the witnesses. What they said in testimony of the resurrection seemed to the disciples as idle tales. The weight of cumulative evidence became inescapable. Thomas was finally driven to the wall. He takes his last stand upon the statement: "I will not believe till I see for myself." There are things, this is one of them, about which no proxy evidence can be accepted. Here is a fact of which the evidence of seeming must be confirmed by the indisputable evidence of the senses. So finally,

Jesus appears to the disciples and submits the physical proof of his resurrection, Luke 24:39. "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet." Also on another occasion he required of Thomas that he put his finger into the print of the nails and his hand into the wound caused by the thrust of the spear. It is on such evidences as these that John writing the final message of inspiration declares in i. John 1:1-4 "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that your joy may be made full."

THE MISSING LINK.

Added to the antecedent improbability and the insufficiency of evidence in the mind of Thomas at the time when he made his famous utterance was the fact that there was also a missing link between historic fact and personal experience. To the fact of the resurrection there had been at least six testimonies involving no less than thirteen persons in addition to the Roman guard. But the fact of the resurrection in the gospel narrative

has a far larger significance than mere fact. It is a fact with sequence. It is a fact which becomes experience.

The most astounding change is wrought in those first disciples by their acceptance of the resurrection of Jesus as a fact. That transformation is first of all a personal one. From humble, ignorant, unknown, insignificant Galilean peasants something happens that thrusts them immediately upon the skyline of the horizon of history.

In addition to the personal transformation, there was an injection of a new quality into their lives by accepting the resurrection as fact, and there came upon them an urge to tell it, so that they went everywhere proclaiming the good news. Thus began the stupendous missionary undertakings of the Christian church. This is the central fact of the triumvirate of vital facts which provided a body for the whole gospel message. On one side the cross of Christ, on the other the appearing again of Christ, in the center the resurrection of Christ. (cf. i. Peter 1.)

When Festus undertakes to explain to Agrippa the accusations of the Jews against Paul, he does so in this language: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix . . . concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no such evil things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of *one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*" This had been the stone of stumbling and

the rock of offense also in Paul's Mars Hill speech in Athens. "The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent; inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again." And in that great classic on immortality, the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul boldly asserts that if in this life only we have hoped in Christ we are of all men most pitiable. Our faith is vain, our preaching is vain. "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be the dead are not raised."

So the evidence only becomes effective when it becomes personal experience. One may accept the fact as many do accept it without any experience of the fact. He cannot accept nor have the experience without the fact. In certain circles much is being made to-day of the Christ of experience which in nearly all cases makes an effort to substitute another Christ for the Christ of the scripture. For some reason there is a widespread unwillingness to accept the scripture narrative at its face value. Great doctrines are violently man-handled so that in the public mind they

are to-day seriously impaired. As, for instance, the virgin birth, the nature miracles, the resurrection, the ascension, the return. It will be seen from that list that the resurrection is in good company in its treatment by the enemies of the Lord. The historic fact is the evidence upon which the spiritual experience is invariably based. Indeed the fact is the only foundation upon which such an experience can be builded. The experience of Thomas was not in substitution for, but in addition to, all other evidence. Faith in the resurrected Christ does produce an experience of a resurrection life now as well as give a certain promise and an anticipation of immortality hereafter.

THE SURRENDER OF HONEST DOUBT TO HONEST CONVICTION.

Thomas accepts the fact, he confesses its implication. Christ, living again after his death, is declared to be the Son of God. There is nothing left for Thomas to do in the face of his acceptance of the testimony of this fact but to confess and enthrone Christ as his Lord. He is not a dead, but a living Christ; not a distant but a present Christ. Here is no non-resident Deity. God is with us, and, instinctively under the compulsion of a great spiritual conviction, supported by all the evidence possible in such a case, Thomas voices his faith—"My Lord and my God." In that cry he is saying the same thing that we sing

when we lift up our voices in the prayer of consecration:

"Take my life, and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

We, too, are urgently involved in the findings and experiences of Thomas. This risen Christ is here to-day, offering a new proof of his saving and transforming power, giving promise again of his perpetual presence, fulfilling for those who will receive it daily his promise: "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age." The transforming experience of Thomas awaits you,—the new quality of life, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit resident within, the realization of divine fellowship, the consciousness of the keeping power of a present Saviour. He is not dead. He ever lives, and living claims your homage, your confession, your service. What have you to say to this Saviour, Companion, Lord? He waits for you—is waiting still. Stretch out your hand of faith and touch him now. Lay down your doubt in the presence of the overwhelming proof of fact. It is not incredible that God should raise the dead. He has raised up Jesus whom men with wicked hands slew. Death could not hold him. The grave had no power over him. He lives, and because he lives you, too, may live in him. Lay hold of eternal life.

X

The Word of the Two Men in White.

MODERN religious radicalism is undertaking a reconstruction of Christianity. I do not doubt its sincerity nor bring under review its piety. I do not arraign its scholarship nor minimize its influence. I would not impugn its motive nor misrepresent its spirit. What I would set in the light is the weapons it uses, the methods it employs and the psychology underlying its religious propaganda.

Let it be repeated, modern religious radicalism is undertaking a reconstruction of Christianity. It would give Christianity a new content, a new interpretation, a new passion, a new incentive and a new destination. The weapons it has fashioned to its hand in the warfare it wages within the churches upon the faith once delivered to the saints are the tools of rationalism made familiar through many like varieties of struggle. They are a restatement of the ancient Arianism and modern Ritchlianism. Christianity is to be reconstructed around a Christ shorn of his supernatural nature and declared to be a creature. Whatever his exalted life, position and influence, yet he is only a creature after the manner of all

other men. As such he conveys to men a certain spirit, a certain interpretation of God and of life which has to each individual and to each generation of men only so much value as may appear to the inner conscience of the individual or the generation. He is to each what he appears to each to be. Radicalism exploits the spirit and the teachings of Jesus. It makes much of the Christ of experience in contradistinction from the Christ of a historically trustworthy Bible.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MODERNISM.

The psychology of modernism is exceedingly subtle and intriguing. There are at least four steps by which consciously or unconsciously it arrives at its Q. E. D. First it sets at variance the four gospels and the epistles. It distinguishes between the Jesus of the four gospels and the Christ of the epistles, especially of the Pauline epistles. It denies to Paul, and for that matter to all the apostles, any adequate knowledge of the real Jesus. It unblushingly asserts that the modern man is more capable of understanding and interpreting him than were the men of that first group who had personal and daily communion with him through three years and who received first hand from him the commission to preach the gospel.

Having created a variance between the four gospels and the epistles, and loudly asserting its preference for the Jesus of the gospels as over

against the Christ of the epistles, it proceeds to build up for itself a non-historical Jesus composed of equal parts of historic fact and modern speculation. It takes his gentleness, his naturalness, his pacific spirit, his supposed attitude upon vexed social and political questions and adds to it various views of the so-called social gospel and thus *creates* a person whom it declares to be the Jesus of the gospels. It seems to be totally unmindful of the fact that the Jesus of the gospels was at least the personage of the virgin birth, of the nature miracles, of the bodily resurrection, and of his oft-repeated personal teaching which declared his essential deity and oneness with the Father. It disregards the fact that the Jesus of the four gospels was a personage of divine wrath as well as divine gentleness, or terrible sternness as well as of tender compassion, and that he made himself supreme Lord in the affairs and over the lives of men. It, like Christian Science, seeks to separate Christ from Jesus making "Christ to dwell in the bosom of the principle of the man Jesus," whatever that may or may not mean. It denies dogma and repudiates theology, not seeming to understand that doctrine is only the skeleton upon which the body of truth hangs, and that theology is but the scientific statement of facts ascertained about God.

It should be clearly noted that modernism insists upon the Jesus of the four gospels as against the Christ of the epistles, that it then creates

another Jesus than the Jesus of the four gospels, and another Christ than the Christ of the epistles, thus dividing the seamless garment of scripture.

I was much interested recently in a discussion participated in by the ladies of my family circle and a visitor. Following the path of the eternal feminine they came to a discussion of clothes. Great admiration was expressed for a piece of real lace worn by the visitor. It appeared to have no seams, no selvage edge, no raw surfaces. In explanation it was pointed out that the modiste had *joined* the parts instead of *seaming* them. That is, she had employed a process of invisible weaving so that the fabric was made to appear, as well as to be, one. Only force could have torn it apart. It is even so with the Bible. Here in the New Testament, for instance, are twenty-seven books, making up the body of scripture, the robe of truth. But the hand of the divine Finisher has created an invisible joining that makes all the twenty-seven books one book. It is indeed a seamless garment of truth joined by a divine hand. But modernism tears the garment of truth asunder. Or, to change the figure, modernism constructs an unscalable wall of the book of Acts, dividing the gospels from the epistles, Jesus from the Christ. Modernism rejects what the scriptures say and the doctrines based upon what the scriptures say, builds a social and intellectual authority of its own, makes itself wise in its own conceit. Doubtless modern-

ists are *the* people, and doubtless wisdom will die with them, but there are those who prefer the old paths and still cherish the ancient landmarks of faith. For them the book of Acts is not a wall of partition, dividing the Jesus of the four gospels from the Christ of the epistles but an arch connecting the two pillars of truth into one building of revelation.

The eleventh verse of the first chapter of Acts, quoted for a text, illustrates this joining process—"*This same Jesus.*" The employment of a double demonstrative puts great emphasis upon the identification of the Person. "This very same Jesus" is the effect under this construction.

This word furnished certain identifications. These identifications become increasingly significant if we consent to the probable identity of the two men in white. They should be identified as Moses and Elijah who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and talked there with Jesus about his decease which he should accomplish in Jerusalem; at the tomb of Jesus in witness of his resurrection (Luke 24:4); on the Mount of Olives witnessing his ascension (Acts 1:11). These also will appear as the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3 ff. at the return of the Lord Jesus. What more fitting than that these representatives of the law and the prophets should appear now in person, since out of the law and the prophets it had been declared that the Christ must suffer and enter into his glory?

IDENTIFIED WITH THE JESUS OF ACTS I.

The Person who in the presence of the waiting disciples ascends into heaven, and whose return to the earth in like manner is promised by the two men in white, is identified by this double demonstrative as the Jesus of the entire first chapter of Acts, the hero of the author. He had just been received up, but he had been made alive after his passion; he had appeared for forty days to his disciples. At least ten appearances under varying and various circumstances are recorded. By many infallible proofs he had demonstrated his resurrection from the dead; he had claimed absolute authority over the lives and actions of his disciples, and in the exercise of that authority had commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was to be given according to the promise of the Father as voiced by himself. They had received his commission to become his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth and for forty days had received from him instructions concerning the Kingdom of God.

IDENTIFIED WITH THE JESUS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

This Jesus, then, is identified also with the Jesus of the four gospels. Acts 1:1. "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach" clearly enough identifies him of whom Luke's Gospel was written with him who is to become the hero of

Acts. That which he began to do and to teach, as recorded in Luke, he later continued to do and to teach in his new body, the Church, as recorded in Acts. There is also the continued use of the name *Jesus*. The Jesus of the first chapter of Acts and the ascension and promised return is also the Jesus of the virgin birth, described in detail in Luke's second chapter. He is also the Person of many wondrous miracles, nature miracles, and others, and of such teaching that when Jewish officers would arrest him and lead him before the Sanhedrin they are prohibited by the fact that never man spake as he spake. His miracles and his teachings are bound together each supporting the other; neither complete without the other. Jesus, not Christ, is identified as the person who suffered, who died, who rose from the dead, and who ascended into heaven in their sight. He is the One of whom John could later write the testimony of these witnesses who saw the passion and the glory of the Lord: "That which we saw, that which we heard, that which we handled of the Word of life declare we unto you." It is the very same Person who had left with his disciples the Great Commission commanding them to go into all the world, making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them. The Jesus of Acts 1 is the Jesus of the gospel story who

created two ordinances, and left them with his disciples when he went away, to be employed by them until his return. The ordinance of baptism, declaring once for all in challenging symbolism his death for sinners and his resurrection unto life for the saints; the sinner's death to sin and his resurrection to holiness; the sinner's death of the body and his resurrection to immortality. He also had left as a testimony of the saints to challenge the attention of sinners, the table of the Lord whereat those who gather should erect a memorial to him showing forth his death till he comes again. Thus he connected the first century message with all succeeding centuries and proposed its interpretation in the significant simplicity of its suggestive symbols.

IDENTIFIED WITH THE CHRIST OF THE EPISTLES.

The epistles proclaim Jesus to be the Christ. There is one God, one mediator between God and man, himself man, Jesus the Christ. "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To believe in the heart that Jesus is raised from the dead is with inspiration to declare him to be the Son of God

with power according to the spirit of holiness, even this very same Jesus, Christ our Lord. The text also identified this Jesus who ascended into heaven with the Christ of the epistles whose return to the earth is declared by the author of every one of them. This return is declared to be one of the three cardinal elements of the gospel, which according to Peter's closing statement incorporates "the blood of Jesus Christ," "the resurrection of Jesus Christ" and "the appearing of Jesus Christ." With these considerations we are prepared for the good news of the return. That promised return is indeed the blessed hope. There rests in it the only adequate inspiration to personal holiness on the part of believers. John voices that inspiration in i. John 3:1-2. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God: and we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." Every personal matter will be set in order in the lives of his disciples as they live in anticipation of his certain return. All questions of moral standards, of personal conduct, of human relations, of measurements and weights, of affiliations and associations, of causes and contributions, of sympathies and service, of things to be approved and of things to

be disapproved, will be judged and decided in the light of his return. The one daily anxiety will be the travail of soul that when he appears we may be without shame and without fear in his presence.

Here, also, is the only adequate incentive to service. David long ago voiced in the ninetieth Psalm a universal longing, in the prayer, "Establish thou the work of our hands, yea the work of our hands establish thou it, oh Lord." There is nothing stable, nothing trustworthy in enduring building or monument or achievement for the Christian apart from the establishment of his labours by the favour of God. It is in connection with this hope that the Spirit through Paul gives perennial exhortation to the believing disciples of the Lord Jesus concerning their labours: "Wherefore, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labours are not in vain in the Lord." Here, then, is adequate inspiration and incentive "for labours oft, for perils by sea and land, for betrayals by false brethren, for hunger and thirst, for exile and loss, for dying daily," for burdens that weigh not alone upon the shoulders, but upon the heart, for the carrying on of the interminable task of the gospel with its stern demand for the immolation of self. God establishes our work and it will be manifest in the day of the re-appearing of our Lord. That day will reveal it. "Each man's work shall be made

manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is."

In the promised return of the Lord Jesus is the assurance of deliverance from death, and victory over the grave.

> "For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For he put all things in subjection under his feet."
>
> "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise."
>
> "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Herein, also, is the only adequate comfort in sorrow. While we await our own victorious and triumphant deliverance from death, often are we required to wait, clad in the habiliments of woe, clothed in the garments of grief. We sit in silence and sorrow while hope with a flutter of her wings disappears in the shadows that separate us from those dear ones whom we have loved long since and lost awhile . . . Who shall dry our tears, who shall dismantle the grave of its claim and take away from death its sting? Who shall

comfort us in the face of the irremediable separation which death brings to the broken ranks of our homes and churches.

Hear once again, oh disciples of the ascended Lord, the promise of the two men in white:

> "This same Jesus whom we have seen go into heaven shall so come in like manner."

And:

> "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*"

Finally there is in his promised return the assurance of adequate reward for all those who live and love and labour in the Lord. It is his promise that when he comes he will reward his servants:

> "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is."

He has linked us on to all the labours of all his saints in all centuries. Without us they are not made perfect. With them the cumulative reward of service grows in value for us. Nothing can be lost from our labours. The cup of cold water given in the name of the Master guarantees a disciple's reward for the giver. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me" will be the King's royal proclamation of privilege and his royal promise of reward in the Great Day of his resurrection.

The night of our sorrows will give place to the dawning day of a perennial joy and we shall by his hand at the last be crowned with gladness and be permitted in his presence forevermore to wear the crown of rejoicing.

Here, then, is his perennial promise of the Spirit to the churches, the perennial hope of the church, the perennial inspiration and encouragement of all saints. Let us repeat it again to our hearts wearying with their labours and their waiting. "This very same Jesus whom you have seen go away into heaven, will so come in like manner again." "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me."

"Even so come, Lord Jesus."

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